



# Provence

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## Best Places to Stay

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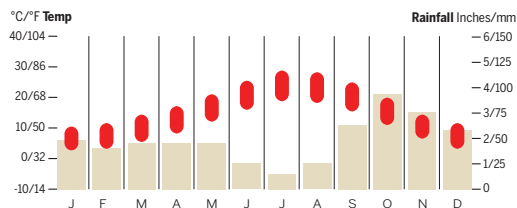
## Why Go?

Provence conjures images of lavender fields, blooming sunflowers, gorgeous stone villages, wonderful food and superb wine – most people's idea of a perfect holiday. It certainly delivers on all those fronts, but what many visitors don't expect is Provence's incredible diversity. The Vaucluse and Luberon regions epitomise the Provençal cliché. But, near the mouth of the Rhône, craggy limestone yields to salt marshes, where pink flamingos replace purple lavender. In the south, the light, which captivated Van Gogh and Cézanne, begins to change, a prelude to Camargue's bleached landscapes. Amid Haute-Provence's soaring peaks and raw wilderness, half-mile-high granite walls lord over a serpentine river at the Gorges du Verdon. The region's other surprises are its cities, like sultry Marseille, the 2013 European Capital of Culture.

One thing remains constant everywhere: the food – clean, bright flavours as simple as sweet tomatoes drizzled with olive oil and sprinkled with fleur de sel from the Camargue.

## When to Go

### Marseille



**Easter** Kick off the bullfighting season with Arles' Feria Pascale.

**July and August** Wade through blooming lavender, and see performing artists at Festival d'Avignon.

**September and October** Wait for cooling temperatures and the grape harvest to bike the back roads of the Luberon.



## Embrace the Arts

Dull holiday snaps? Improve your photography skills with a tailor-made two-day course (from €250) at **Les Ateliers de L'Image Photography Workshops** (☎04 90 92 51 50; [www.hotelphoto.com](http://www.hotelphoto.com); 36 bd Victor Hugo, St-Rémy de Provence), in a design hotel.

Or try your hand at Jean-Claude Lorber's painting and drawing workshops at **L'Atelier Doré** (☎04 90 06 29 60; [www.mas-des-amandiers.com](http://www.mas-des-amandiers.com), in French; 48 chemin des Puits Neufs, Cavaillon; 2hr session adult/child €21/17, 20hrs €195/140) in an 18th-century farmhouse.

Brush up on your French at **Le Mas Perréal** (☎04 90 75 46 31; [www.masperreal.com](http://www.masperreal.com); Lieu-dit la Fortune, St-Saturnin-lès-Apt), where Elisabeth, a long-time French teacher, offers lessons to guests (€30 per hour) at her gorgeous *chambre d'hôte* (B&B).

### GETTING AWAY FROM IT ALL

It's not too difficult to get off the beaten path in Provence. In the great outdoors, hike along Marseille's rocky coastline at Les Calanques (p771) or picnic in the peaceful Jardins de l'Abbaye (p795), a world away from Avignon's crowds, but only a tiny hop across the river. Explore the peninsulas and islands of the Réserve Nationale de Camargue (p784) or Mont Ventoux' (p801) tracks and trails.

For a more luxe experience, burrow deep into the Combe de Lourmarin to Ferme Auberge Le Castellas (p811) or Auberge de l'Aiguebrun (p811) for a lovely Sunday meal. Then find the hidden artisan ice-creamery with a hilltop view, L'Art Glacier (p811), on Luberon back roads.

Finally, drop in to Priuré de Ganagobie (p812), where the monks stick by two main tenets, one of which is 'listen': share their serenity.

## Top Cooking Courses

- » Auberge La Feniére (p811) Cooking classes and lunch with Michelin-starred chef Reine Sammut (€145) or her staff (€75 to €95) include baking for children.
- » La Chassagnette (p783) Pick your ingredients from the garden of Alain Ducasse—prodigy Armand Arnal, then work with him to prepare an unforgettable lunch (€90).
- » Le Marmiton (p791) At Avignon's Hôtel la Mirande, create a fabulous lunch (€110) or dinner (€135) with the region's best chefs; or put the kids to work (€46).
- » La Table de Pablo (p809) Join up-and-coming chef Thomas Gallardo on Saturday morning to learn the tricks of the trade (€70).

### TRUFFLE SNUFFLING

Glimpse into the clandestine world of the 'black diamond' on a truffle hunt near Carpentras at **La Truffe du Ventoux** (☎04 90 66 82 21; [www.truffes-ventoux.com](http://www.truffes-ventoux.com); La Quinsonne, 634 chemin du Traversier, Montoux; ☼Oct–mid-Mar).

## Bike Hire

Many companies deliver bikes to your door for free; book ahead if you want to pedal part of your journey. Check [www.provence-a-velo.fr](http://www.provence-a-velo.fr) or town information sections in this chapter for more information.

## Planning Ahead

If you're around for the region's biggest festivals, booking tickets and accommodation in advance is essential:

- » Arles FERIA Pascale (bull-fighting festival; p781)
- » Festival d'Avignon (p791)
- » Festival de Lacoste (p810)

## Resources

- » Farm visits ([www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com](http://www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com))
- » La Route Napoléon ([www.route-napoleon.com](http://www.route-napoleon.com))
- » Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur information, including eco-travel ([www.decouverte-paca.fr](http://www.decouverte-paca.fr))
- » Current events ([www.visitprovence.com](http://www.visitprovence.com))
- » Vaucluse guide ([www.provenceguide.com](http://www.provenceguide.com))
- » Bus information ([www.vaucluse.fr](http://www.vaucluse.fr))





## Provence Highlights

- 1 Soak up seething, heady **Marseille** (p756)
- 2 Trail **Van Gogh** (p780) around Arles, visiting spots where he painted some of his best-known canvases
- 3 Spot pink flamingos while riding white horses in the **Camargue** (p784)
- 4 Canoe, canyon, raft or float down the vertigo-inducing **Gorges du Verdon** (p814)





**5** Take a walk on the wild side in the stunning, remote valleys of the **Parc National du Mercantour** (p815)

**6** Watch an opera at Orange's exceptional **Roman theatre** (Théâtre Antique; p780) on a balmy summer night

**7** Explore winding roads and stone villages like **Rousillon** (p809) amid Luberon's cherry orchards and sunflower fields



## History

Settled over the centuries variously by the Ligurians, the Celts and the Greeks, the area between the Alps, the sea and the Rhône River flourished following Julius Caesar's conquest in the mid-1st century BC. The Romans called the area *Provincia Romana*, which evolved into the name Provence. After the collapse of the Roman Empire in the late 5th century, Provence was invaded several times, by the Visigoths, Burgundians and Ostrogoths.

During the 14th century the Catholic Church, under a series of French-born popes, moved its headquarters from feud-riven Rome to Avignon, thus beginning the most resplendent period in the city's (and region's) history. Provence became part of France in 1481, but Avignon and Carpentras remained under papal control until the Revolution.

### Getting There & Away

The TGV (Train à Grande Vitesse, ie 'high-speed train') zips from Paris to Aix-en-Provence (three hours), Arles (four hours), Avignon (2¾ hours) and Marseille (three hours). On Saturdays in July and August, there's direct Eurostar service from London to Avignon (from €135 return, six hours; see p973 for more details on Eurostar Travel).

**Lignes Express Régional** (LER; [www.info-ler.fr](http://www.info-ler.fr)) runs regional buses. For buses to the Alps of Haute-Provence, see [www.cg04.fr](http://www.cg04.fr) (in French), and navigate to 'transport'.

A smorgasbord of airlines serve Aéroport Marseille-Provence (p770). Ferries sail from Marseille to Sardinia, Tunisia and Corsica (p770).

## MARSEILLE REGION

### Marseille

POP 860,363

Marseille was for many years the butt of French jokes. No more. The *cité phocéenne* has made an unprecedented comeback, undergoing a vast makeover. The results look rather fabulous: witness the Panier quarter, the new République neighbourhood with its swanky boutiques and Haussmannian buildings, the city's shiny tram line, and the brand new docks and marina around the famous striped Cathédrale de la Major.

Marseillais will tell you that the city's rough-and-tumble edginess is part of its charm and that, for all its flaws, it is a very endearing place. They're right: Marseille

grows on you with its history, fusion of cultures, *souq*-like markets, millennia-old port and *corniches* (coastal roads) along rocky inlets and sun-baked beaches. Their ultimate vindication came with Marseille's selection as European Capital of Culture in 2013.

## History

Around 600 BC, Greek mariners founded Massilia, a trading post, at what is now Marseille's Vieux Port (Old Port). In the 1st century BC the city lost out by backing Pompey the Great rather than Julius Caesar: Caesar's forces captured Massilia in 49 BC and directed Roman trade elsewhere.

Marseille became part of France in the 1480s, but retained its rebellious streak. Its citizens embraced the Revolution, sending 500 volunteers to defend Paris in 1792. Heading north, they sang a rousing march, ever after dubbed 'La Marseillaise' – now the national anthem. Trade with North Africa escalated after France occupied Algeria in 1830, and the Suez Canal opened in 1869.

After the World Wars, a steady flow of migration from North Africa began and with it the rapid expansion of Marseille's periphery.

## Sights

### Vieux Port

HISTORIC NEIGHBOURHOOD

(Map p762) Ships have docked for more than 26 centuries at Marseille's colourful Vieux Port. Although the main commercial docks were transferred to the Joliette area on the coast north of here in the 1840s, it still overflows with fishing craft, yachts and local ferries.

**FREE** **Cross-Port Ferry** (☎8am-12.30pm & 1-5pm) runs between the town hall (north side) and place aux Huiles (south side).

Guarding the harbour are **Bas Fort St-Nicolas** on the southern side and, across the water, **Fort St-Jean**, founded in the 13th century by the Knights Hospitaller of St John of Jerusalem.

In 1943 the neighbourhood on the northern side of quai du Port, abutting Le Panier quarter, was dynamited, and much of it rebuilt afterward.

Standing guard between the old and the 'new' port is the striking Byzantine-style **Cathédrale de la Major**. Its 'stripy' facade is made of local Cassis stone and green Florentine marble. Amazingly this unique



monument stood for years in a wasteland, but now it's the center of the dynamic dockland redevelopment around **La Joliette**.

On the Vieux Port's southern side, late-night restaurants and cafés pack **place Thiers** and **cours Honoré d'Estienne d'Orves** pedestrian zone.

Northeast of La Canebière and cours Belsunce, the run-down **Belsunce** area is slowly being rehabilitated.

For chic, street-smart shopping, stroll west to the fashionable **6th arrondissement**, especially pedestrianised **rue St-Ferréol**. The once-deserted, newly rehabilitated **rue de la République** resembles a Parisian boulevard, and is lined with major chains.

Heading west of the Vieux Port brings you to **Abbaye St-Victor**, birthplace of Christianity in Marseille, built on a 3rd-century BC necropolis. Perched at the peninsula's edge, the **Jardin du Pharo** is a perfect picnic spot and ideal for watching sunsets.

## Le Panier

HISTORIC NEIGHBOURHOOD

(Map p762) North of the Vieux Port, Marseille's old city, Le Panier quarter (2e), translates to 'the basket', and was the site of the Greek *agora* (marketplace). Today its winding, narrow streets are a jumble of artisans shops and washing lines strung outside candy-coloured houses. Expect to get lost (even locals get turned around); that's part of the fun. On warm evenings, cafés at **place de Lenche** provide great people-watching.

Marseille architect and sculptor Pierre Puget (1620–94) was born in the house opposite 10 rue du Petit Puits, and designed the arcaded courtyard of the **Centre de la Vieille Charité** (Old Charity Cultural Centre; 2 rue de la Charité, 2e; Joliette) Initially built as a charity shelter for the town's poor, the stunning arched pink-stone courtyard now houses Marseille's beautiful **Musée d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne** (Museum of Mediterranean Archeology) and **Musée d'Arts Africains, Océaniques & Amérindiens** (Museum of African, Oceanic & American Indian Art). The latter contains a striking collection of masks from the Americas, Africa and the Pacific.

## Château d'If

ISLAND CHÂTEAU

(<http://if.monuments-nationaux.fr/en/>; adult/child €5/free; 9.30am–6.30pm, closed Mon winter) Immortalised in Alexandre Dumas' classic 1840s novel *Le Comte de Monte Cris-*

*to* (The Count of Monte Cristo), the 16th-century fortress-turned-prison Château d'If sits on a 3-hectare island 3.5km west of the Vieux Port. Political prisoners were incarcerated here, along with hundreds of Protestants (many of whom perished in the dungeons), the Revolutionary hero Mirabeau (who didn't fare so badly, once he'd seduced the cook) and the Communards of 1871.

**Frioul If Express** (Map p762; 04 91 46 54 65; [www.frioul-if-express.com](http://www.frioul-if-express.com); 1 quai des Belges, 1er) boats leave for Château d'If from the Vieux Port at the corner of quai de la Fraternité and quai de Rive Neuve. There are over 15 daily departures in summer, fewer in winter (€10 return, 20 minutes).

## Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde

CHURCH

(Map p758; montée de la Bonne Mère; basilica & crypt 7am–7pm, longer hrs in summer) The opulent, domed 19th-century Romano-Byzantine basilica occupies Marseille's highest point, lordling it over the city skyline. Built from 1853 to 1864, it's ornamented with coloured marble, murals depicting the safe passage of sailing vessels and intricate gold-laid mosaics superbly restored in 2006. Crowning the bell tower, a 9.7m-tall gilded statue of the Virgin Mary stands atop a 12m-high pedestal. Bullet marks and shrapnel scars on the northern facade evidence the fierce fighting of Marseille's Battle of Liberation (15–25 August 1944).

Bus 60 links the Vieux Port with the basilica. Or, the 'little train' (p761) departs from the port and remains for 20 minutes before returning downhill. By foot, plan 30 minutes (expect steep hills) each way from the Vieux Port.

## Îles du Frioul

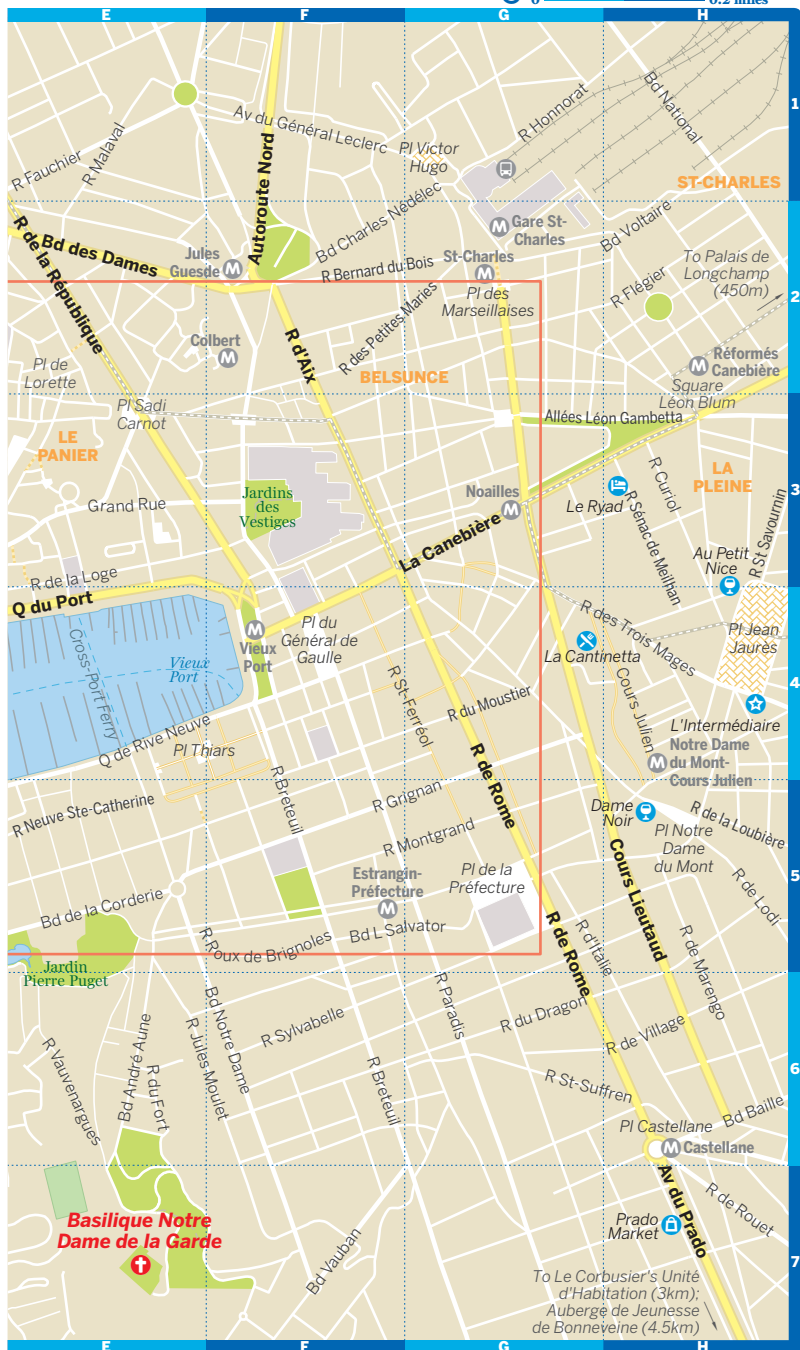
HISTORIC ISLANDS

A few hundred metres west of the Château d'If are the **Ratoneau** and **Pomègues**. The tiny islands (each about 2.5km long) were linked by a dyke in the 1820s. From the 17th to 19th centuries they were used to quarantine those suspected of carrying plague or cholera: the city was ravaged by plague in 1720, when a merchant vessel carrying the disease broke quarantine to avoid losing its shipment. The resultant epidemics killed around 50,000 of the city's 90,000 inhabitants. The island of Ratoneau has ruins of the old yellow-fever quarantine hospital. Seabirds and rare plants thrive on the islands, which also have uncrowded beaches.











## MARSEILLE IN...

## Two Days

Breakfast at **Pain & Cie** and grab to-go sandwiches near the ferry at **Jardin des Vestiges**, before catching a boat to **Château d'If**; to hit the beach as well, buy a combined ticket to **îles du Frioul**. Back on the **Vieux Port**, stroll the quays and visit the historic **Panier** district. Dine on fresh fish at **Chez Madie Les Galinettes**, and sip cocktails at **La Caravelle**.

On the second day, hop on bikes to **Espace Borély** for water sports. Alternatively, take **Le Grand Tour** bus and stop at **Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde** for sweeping views. Visit **Au Petit Nice** in artsy *cours Julien* for an aperitif, before dinner at **La Cantinetta**.

## Four Days

On day three, take in magnificent turquoise waters at the **Calanques**, then reward your hiking with **bouillabaisse**. On the fourth day, explore the great **Musée d'Histoire de Marseille** and the magnificent fountains at **Palais de Longchamp**. Hit the **markets** for picnic supplies and climb to the sculpted stone benches at the **Jardin du Pharo**. Visit beautiful **Vallon des Auffes** to finish your trip with sautéed squid and garlic pizza, rooftop at **Chez Jeannot**.

Boats to Château d'If also serve the *îles du Frioul* (€10 return, 35 minutes).

**FREE Palais de Longchamp** PALACE, PARK  
(Longchamp Palace; bd Philippon, 4e;

5 Cinq Avenues Longchamp, 6 Longchamp) The colonnaded Palais de Longchamp and its spectacular fountains were constructed in the 1860s, in part to disguise a water tower at the terminus of an aqueduct from the River Durance. The northern wing houses Marseille's oldest museum, the **Musée des Beaux-Arts**, undergoing renovations at press time and slated to reopen in 2012. The shaded park is one of the city centre's few green spaces, popular with local families.

## Musée d'Histoire de Marseille

HISTORY MUSEUM

(Map p762; ground fl, Centre Bourse shopping centre, 1er; ☎noon-7pm Mon-Sat; 7 Vieux Port) A fascinating insight into Marseille's cultural heritage, this museum has extraordinary exhibits, such as the remains of a 3rd-century AD merchant vessel, discovered in the Vieux Port in 1974. To preserve the soaked and decaying wood, it was freeze-dried where it now sits behind glass. Most explanatory notes are in French only.

## Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation

MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE

(☎04 91 16 78 00; www.hotelcorbusier.com; 280 bd Michelet, 8e; ☎by appointment; 7 Le Corbusier) Visionary architect Le Corbusier redefined urban living in 1952 with the completion of this vertical, 337-apartment

'garden city', also known as Cité Radieuse (Radiant City). Along its darkened hallways, primary-coloured downlights create eerie tunnels leading to a minisupermarket, architectural bookshop and panoramic rooftop 'desert garden'. However forward-thinking the architecture, it has esoteric appeal: many just see a concrete apartment block.

For Le Corbusier lovers, stay at **Hôtel Le Corbusier** (d €95 to €125), two floors in the middle of the tower. 'Cabins' are tiny cells; studios look sharp, particularly those with sea views and Le Corbusier chairs, but for design reasons, toilets are the 1950s originals. Service is weak. If less committed, dine at its fine restaurant, **Le Ventre de l'Architecte** (☎04 91 16 78 00; lunch menus €28, dinner menus €59-69; ☎Tue-Sat), which has distant Med views and specialises in foie gras.

Catch bus 83 or 21 to Le Corbusier stop.

**FREE Musée du Santon** DOLL MUSEUM  
(Map p762; 49 rue Neuve Ste-Catherine,

7e; ☎10am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Tue-Sat; 7 Vieux Port) One of Provence's most enduring, and endearing, Christmas traditions are its *santons*, plaster-moulded, kiln-fired nativity figures, first created by Marseillais artisan Jean-Louis Lagnel (1764-1822). The tiny museum displays a private collection of 18th- and 19th-century *santons*. At adjoining **ateliers** (workshops; ☎8am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Thu), watch the figures being crafted, or buy them at the boutique.





## Activities

### Cycling

BIKE RIDES

Hop on *le vélo* (p771) rental bikes and pedal towards the Pharo area, then south along the corniche to take in the seascape. Stop at cute little fishing port **Vallon des Auffes** before pressing on towards the beaches and leisure areas of **Espace Borély**, where cycle lanes start. The trip is about 6km. For the energetic, it's 10km round trip from Borély to the charming hamlet of **Les Goudes**, where it used to be all the rage to own a fishing cabin.

### Beaches

BEACHES

On hot days, locals crowd easy-to-reach **Plage des Catalans** (Map p758; 3 rue des Catalans; ☉8.30am-6.30pm) and, further south, the **Prado Beaches** (end of av Prado). Or visit the peaceful, rocky shores of Îles du Frioul.

### La Bastide des Bains

SPA

(Map p762; ☎04 91 33 39 13; www.bastide-des-bains.com, in French; 19 rue Sainte; entrance €30; ☉10am-8pm Mon-Sat, to 6pm Sun) A beautiful *hammam* with mixed and women-only opening hours. Treatments available.



## Tours

### Le Grand Tour

BUS TOUR

(Map p762; ☎04 91 91 05 82; www.marseillelegrandtour.com; adult/child €18/8; ☉10am-7pm) Hop-on, hop-off, open-topped double-decker bus travels between the main sights, starting at Vieux Port, and including the Corniche and Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde. Buy tickets from the tourist office or on board.

### Little Train

TRAIN TOUR

(Map p762; www.petit-train-marseille.com; adult/child €7/4; ☉10am-6pm) Tootles around Le Panier's hilly streets.

### Guided Tour

WALKING TOUR

(per person €6.50; ☉tours 10am Sat Jul & Aug, 2pm every other Sat Sep-Jun) From the tourist office.



### Marseille Provence Greeters

WALKING TOUR

(www.marseilleprovencegreeters.com) Free walking tours by locals; advance website registration required.

### Croisières Marseille Calanques

BOAT TOUR

(☎08 25 13 68 00; www.croisieres-marseille-calanques.com, in French; 74 quai du Port, 2e) Boat trips (in French) from the Vieux Port to Cassis (€25). Trips pass the Calanques.



## Festivals & Events

### Carnaval de Marseille

STREET CARNIVAL

Mad festival with decorated floats; March.

### Beach Volleyball World Championships

SPORTS

Hosted by Plage du Prado; July.

### Festival de Marseille

PERFORMING ARTS

(www.festivaldemarseille.com, in French) Three weeks of contemporary international dance, theatre, music and art; July.

### Five Continents Jazz Festival

JAZZ

(www.festival-jazz-cinq-continents.com, in French) Acid jazz, funk and folk music fest; July.

### Fiesta des Suds

WORLD MUSIC

(www.dock-des-suds.org) World music at Dock des Suds; October.

### Foire aux Santonniers

CHRISTMAS FIGURINES

Since 1803 traditional *santon* makers have flocked to Marseille for this annual fair; December.



## Sleeping

Marseille's hotels have been upgraded in preparation for 2013 festivities, with reliable midrange options and some top-end stand-outs. The hostel scene is underdeveloped.



### Casa Honoré

BOUTIQUE B&amp;B €€€

(Map p762; ☎04 96 11 01 62, 06 09 50 38 52; www.casahonore.com; 123 rue Sainte, 7e; d €150-200; ☉☎☎; ☎Vieux Port) Los Angeles meets Marseille at this four-room *maison d'hôte*, built around a central courtyard with lap pool shaded by banana trees. The fashion-forward style reflects the owner's love for contemporary interior design (she has a shop down the block), using disparate elements like black wicker and the occasional cow skull, which come together in one sexy package. One complaint: bathrooms are partitioned by curtains, not doors.

### Villa Monticelli

B&amp;B €€

(☎04 91 22 15 20; www.villamonticelli.com; 96 rue du Commandant Rolland, 8e; d €90-110; ☉☎☎) Colette and Jean are passionate about their city and share their favourite addresses with guests. The five exquisite *chambre d'hôte* rooms in their stunning villa are worth the slightly outer-city location. Breakfast of homemade everything (jams, yoghurts, crêpes, etc) is served on the panoramic-view terrace. Best value for this class of accommodation.











## Central Marseille

### ☉ Top Sights

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### ☉ Sights

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4 Centre de la Vieille Charité .....	C1
5 Fort St-Jean.....	A4
Musée d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne .....	(see 4)
Musée des Arts Africains, Océaniens & Amérindiens.....	(see 4)
6 Musée du Santon.....	C6

### Activities, Courses & Tours

7 La Bastide des Bains .....	F6
8 Le Grand Tour Departure Point .....	E4
9 Little Train's Departure Point .....	E4

### 🛏 Sleeping

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11 Hôtel Belle-Vue .....	E4
12 Hôtel Carré du Vieux Port.....	F4
13 Hôtel du Palais .....	F7
14 Hôtel Escale Oceania.....	F4
15 Hôtel Hermès .....	E3
16 Hôtel Relax .....	F5
17 Hôtel Résidence du Vieux Port .....	E4
18 Hôtel Saint-Ferréol .....	G5
19 Hôtel St-Louis .....	G4
20 Hôtel Vertigo .....	G1

### 🍴 Eating

21 Café Debout.....	F5
22 Centre Bourse Shopping Centre .....	F3
23 Chez Madie Les Galinettes.....	C4
24 Fish Market .....	E4
25 Four des Navettes .....	C7
26 Fruit & Vegetable Market.....	F7
27 Jardin des Vestiges .....	F4

28 La Cantine .....	E6
29 La Nautique.....	D5
30 Le Clan des Cigales .....	C2
31 Le Femina .....	G4
32 Le Glacier du Roi.....	B3
33 Le Mas .....	F6
34 Le Moment .....	D2
35 Le Souk .....	C4
36 L'Epuisée .....	H3
37 Marché des Capucins .....	H3
38 O'Stop .....	F5
39 Pain & Cie .....	E6
40 Pain de l'Opéra.....	F6
41 Pizzeria Chez Étienne.....	D1
42 Simply Food .....	G5
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45 Cup of Tea .....	D3
La Caravelle.....	(see 11)
46 La Part des Anges .....	F6
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50 La Noche.....	C6
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52 OM's Boutique Officielle.....	G3
53 Opéra Municipal de Marseille.....	F5
54 Pelle Mêle .....	D5
55 XY Le Club .....	F6

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57 La Maison du Pastis .....	D4
58 Librairie de la Bourse.....	F5
59 Place aux Huiles.....	D3

## Hôtel Résidence du Vieux Port

VIEW HOTEL €€€

(Map p762; ☎04 91 91 91 22; www.hotelmarseille.com; 18 quai du Port, 2e; d €180-200, apt €260; 📶📶📶; 🚶Vieux Port) Marseille's top view hotel got a makeover in 2010 in vaguely Jetsons-meets-Mondrian style, with swoop-backed furniture and bold primary colours. Every room looks sharp, and has a balcony with knockout views of the old

port and Notre Dame. Save €20 by booking a lower floor.

## Le Petit Nice-Passédat

LUXURY INN €€€

(☎04 91 59 25 92; www.passedat.fr; Anse de Mالدormé, 7e; d from €370; 📶📶📶) Marseille's very best small luxury hotel is home to virtuositic **Gerald Passédat** (menus €85-250; 🕒Tue-Sat), Marseille's only three-Michelin-star restaurant.



(Map p758; ☎04 91 15 59 55; www.sofitel-marseille-vieuxport.com; 36 bd Charles Livon, 7e; d from €205; 🍷🍷🍷) Marseille's top full-service hotel commands spectacular views of the sea and the old port. Rooms have all requisite bells and whistles, from iPod docks to feather beds; some have double-size soaking tubs. Great spa.

### Hôtel Saint-Ferréol

SMALL HOTEL €€

(Map p762; ☎04 91 33 12 21; www.hotelsaintferreol.com; 19 rue Pisançon, 1er; d €99-120; 🍷🍷🍷; 🚶Vieux Port) On the corner of the city's prettiest pedestrianised street, this plush hotel has individually decorated rooms, many inspired by artists like Van Gogh and Cézanne, with thick carpeting and spotless bathrooms. Exceptional service.

### Hôtel Belle-Vue

VIEW HOTEL €€

(Map p762; ☎04 96 17 05 40; 34 quai du Port, 2e; d €84-135; 🍷🍷🍷; 🚶Vieux Port) Rooms at this old-fashioned hotel are tastefully decorated with midbudget simplicity, but have million-dollar portside views. Bathrooms have occasional mildew spots, but nothing egregious. No lift and steep stairs, but La Caravelle, one of Marseille's coolest bars, is downstairs.

### Hôtel Le Richelieu

SMALL HOTEL €€

(Map p758; ☎04 91 31 01 92; www.lerichelieu-marseille.com; 52 corniche Président John F Kennedy, 7e; d €53-88, tr €91-110; 🍷🍷🍷) An economical seaside choice with odd-shaped rooms, but the owners keep them looking fresh. The best face the sea, lending a beach-house feel. There's an adjacent beach and shared water-view terrace, but no lift.

### Hôtel Hermès

HOTEL €€

(Map p762; ☎04 96 11 63 63; www.hotelmarseille.com; 2 rue Bonnetterie, 2e; s €50, d €70-90; 🍷🍷🍷; 🚶Vieux Port) Rooms are small and need new paint and wallpaper, but they're otherwise clean and well kept. A rooftop terrace, for breakfast or evening drinks, adds value. The nuptial suite (€100), up a rooftop ladder, has knockout panoramic views.

### Le Ryad

BOULIQUE HOTEL €€

(Map p758; ☎04 91 47 74 54; www.leryad.fr; 16 rue Sénac de Meilhan, 1er; s €80-125, d €95-140; 🍷Noailles, 🚶Canebière Garibaldi) With arched alcoves, warm colours and minimalist decor, Le Ryad draws influence from Morocco. Despite the four-storey walk-up, it's worth booking the top-floor room (Mogador) for



## MAX-OUT MARSEILLE

The **Marseille City Pass** (€22/29 for a 1-/2-day pass) gives you access to the city's museums, guided tours of the town and unlimited travel on all public transport (including the little train to Notre Dame). It also includes the boat trip and entrance to the Château d'If, and offers discounts, such as on Le Grand Tour tourist bus. It's not necessary for children under 12, as many attractions are greatly reduced or free. Buy it at the tourist office.

its tiny rooftop terrace. Great service makes up for the sometimes-sketchy neighbourhood.

### Hôtel Escale Oceania

HOTEL €€

(Map p762; ☎04 91 90 61 61; www.oceaniahotels.com; 5 La Canebière, 1er; d €100-160; 🍷🍷🍷; 🚶Vieux Port) Though rooms run small – you're buying the Vieux Port location – they're fresh and clean, following a 2009 renovation. Spotless bathrooms have big walk-in showers. Rooms on the Canebière side have wrought-iron port-view balconies.



### Hôtel Vertigo

HOSTEL, HOTEL €

(Map p762; ☎04 91 91 07 11; www.hotelvertigo.fr; 42 rue des Petites Maries, 1er; dm €25-27, d €60-70; 🍷🍷; 🚶Gare St-Charles SNCF) This snappy boutique hostel kisses goodbye to dodgy bunks and hospital-like decor. Here it's 'hello' to vintage posters, designer chrome kitchen, groovy communal spaces and polite multilingual staff. Double rooms are particularly good, some with private terrace. No curfew (or lift, alas). A second, all-dorm facility is closer to the Vieux Port.

### Hôtel du Palais

SMALL HOTEL €€

(Map p758; ☎04 91 37 78 86; www.hotelmarsaille.com; 26 rue Breteuil, 6e; d €98-130; 🍷🍷; 🚶Es-trangin Préfecture) Ten of the 22 rooms at this small hotel have king-sized beds, a rarity in France. If you're a light sleeper, book a courtyard-facing room. Fourth-floor rooms have the most charm, with sloping, beamed ceilings.

### Hôtel Carré du Vieux Port

HOTEL €€

(Map p762; ☎04 91 33 02 33; www.hvpm.fr; 6 rue Beauveau, 1er; s €86-92, d €92-98, tr €110; 🍷🍷🍷; 🚶Vieux Port) The look is generic – think stucco walls and low-pile carpeting – but the location is central, rooms fresh and



baths spotless. Double-pane windows block noise.

### Hôtel Relax

SMALL HOTEL €

(Map p762; ☎04 91 33 15 87; <http://relax.hotel.free.fr>, in French; 4 rue Corneille, 1er; d €60-70; ☎☎; ☎Vieux Port) Overlooking Marseille's Opera House, this family-run 20-room hotel lacks good noise insulation and space, but given the location, cleanliness and extras like fridges and hairdryers, it's a bargain. No lift.

### Hôtel St-Louis

BUDGET HOTEL €

(Map p762; ☎04 91 54 02 74; [www.hotel-st-louis.com](http://www.hotel-st-louis.com); 2 rue des Récollettes, 1er; d €67-72, tr €90; ☎☎☎; ☎Noailles, ☎Canebière Garibaldi) Though we like the vintage-1800s facade, good mattresses, wooden furniture, central location and friendly service, some find rooms shabby and noisy (rooms 11 and 12 are loudest).

### Auberge de Jeunesse de Bonneveine

HOSTEL €

(☎04 91 17 63 30; [www.fuaj.org](http://www.fuaj.org), in French; impasse du Docteur Bonfils, 8e; dm €18.60, d incl sheets & breakfast €44; ☎Feb-Dec; ☎) Rooms are spartan and it's far out of town, *but* is close to the beach, and organises activities like kayaking and kitesurfing. Take bus 44 (stop Bonnefon).



## Eating

Marseille is known for bouillabaisse and *supsions* (pan-sautéed squid with garlic, parsley and lemon).

The Vieux Port is packed with restaurants, but choose carefully. The cours Julien and surrounding streets have world cuisine. For pizza and couscous under €10, nose around near Marché des Capucins. In summer, find €2 fresh-squeezed juices at the seasonal stand near the little train, at Vieux Port. New eateries are popping up at **Les Docks** (Map p758; 10 place de la Joliette, 2e; ☎Joliette), in the developing Joliette neighbourhood.

Cafés crowd quai de Rive Neuve and cours Honoré d'Estienne d'Orves (1e), a large, long, open square two blocks south of the quay. Another cluster overlooks place de la Préfecture, at the southern end of rue St-Ferréol (1er).

### Péron

CONTEMPORARY €€€

(Map p758; ☎04 91 52 15 22; [www.restaurant-peron.com](http://www.restaurant-peron.com), in French; 56 corniche Président John F Kennedy, 7e; mains €35; ☎lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Tue-Sat) Perched on the edge of the

corniche, with magnificent views of the Château d'If, Péron is one of Marseille's top tables. The seafood-heavy menu (think marinated tuna, scallops with lemon polenta) is phenomenal; book before dark to watch the sunset.

### La Cantinetta

ITALIAN €€

(Map p758; ☎04 91 48 10 48; 24 cours Julien; mains €9-19; ☎Tue-Sat; ☎Notre Dame du Mont-Cours Julien) The top table at cours Julien serves perfectly al dente housemade pasta, paper-thin prosciutto, marinated vegetables, *bresaola* (air-dried beef) and risotto. Tables in the convivial dining room are cheek by jowl; we prefer the sun-dappled, tiled-patio garden. Reservations essential.

### Chez Madie Les Galinettes

PROVENÇAL €€

(Map p762; ☎04 91 90 40 87; 138 quai du Port, 2e; menus €25-35; ☎lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, closed Sat lunch in summer; ☎☎Vieux Port) The port-side terrace is perfect on long summer evenings, but if weather isn't cooperating, the interior's modern art brings consolation. The Provençal-rooted menu features lots of fish and good bouillabaisse you'll need to order 48 hours ahead.

### Jardin des Vestiges

ARMENIAN-MEDITERRANEAN €

(Map p762; 15 rue Reine Elizabeth, 1er; mains €7-13; ☎9am-6pm Mon-Sat; ☎Vieux Port) Our favourite budget choice draws on Armenian, Greek and Lebanese in dishes like kebabs, stuffed eggplant, moussaka and tabouleh. It's ideal for to-go sandwiches (€4 to €6) before boarding ferries to the islands.

### La Cantine

FRENCH-CORSICAN €€

(Map p762; ☎04 91 33 37 09; 27 cours Honoré d'Estienne d'Orves, 1er; mains 15-18; ☎lunch Mon-Sat, dinner nightly; ☎Vieux Port) Down-tempo beats, low lighting and wood-beamed ceilings set a sexy backdrop for Corsican specialties, including *figatelli* (coarse-ground robustly seasoned sausage); and earthy French dishes like sautéed veal liver *en persillade* (parsley, garlic and herbs) and grilled fish. Reservations advised.

### Pizzeria Chez Étienne

ITALIAN €€

(Map p762; 43 rue de Lorette, 2e; mains €12-15; ☎Mon-Sat; ☎Colbert) This classic family-style neighbourhood haunt serves the best wood-fired pizza in Marseille, succulent beef steak and scrumptious pan-fried squid. Pop in beforehand to reserve in person (there's no phone). Skip the nothing-special pastas. No credit cards.



## BOUILLABAISSE

Originally cooked by fishermen from the scraps of their catch, bouillabaisse is Marseille's classic signature dish. True bouillabaisse includes at least four different kinds of fish, sometimes shellfish, which is why it's served to a minimum of two people. Don't trust tourist-trap restaurants that promise cheap bouillabaisse. The real McCoy costs about €55 per person and should be reserved 48 hours ahead, enough time to procure the correct ingredients. It's served in two parts: the broth (*soupe de poisson*), rich with tomato, saffron and fennel; and the cooked fish, deboned tableside and presented on a platter. On the side are croutons and *rouille* (a bread-thickened garlic-chilli pepper mayonnaise) and grated cheese, usually gruyère. Spread *rouille* on the crouton, top with cheese, and float it in the soup. Be prepared for a huge meal (over 200g of protein per person) and tons of garlic.

The most reliably consistent spots for real bouillabaisse include:

**Le Rhul** (Map p758; ☎04 91 52 01 77; www.lerhul.fr, in French; 269 corniche John F Kennedy; €50) This long-standing classic has atmosphere (however kitschy): a 1940s seaside hotel with Mediterranean views.

**L'Epuisette** (Map p758; ☎04 91 52 17 82; www.l-epuisette.com; Vallon des Auffes; €55; ☺Tue-Sat) The swankiest (by far) has a Michelin star and knockout water-level views from an elegantly austere dining room. First courses cost €34 to €45 and desserts €20, though you'll likely not have room.

**Restaurant Michel** (Map p758; Chez Michel; ☎04 91 52 30 63; http://restaurant-michel-13.fr, in French; 6 rue des Catalans; €60; ☺dinner) Tops since 1946. Alas, the overly bright dining room lacks romance.

### Chez Jeannot

MARSEILLAIS €€

(Map p758; ☎04 91 52 11 28; 129 rue du Vallon des Auffes; mains €12-25; ☺Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) An institution among Marseillais, the jovial rooftop terrace overlooking the port of Vallon des Auffes books days ahead (but you can usually score an inside table). Stick to thin-crust pizzas and *supions*, called 'chip-pirons' on the menu; seafood and meats are overpriced.

### Le Mas

CLASSIC FRENCH €€

(Map p762; ☎04 91 33 25 90; 4 rue Lulli; mains €18-26; ☺noon-4pm & 8pm-6am Mon-Sat; ☞Es-trangin Préfecture) Celebrities' photos line the walls at Marseille's only late-night restaurant, ideal when you've lingered too long over cocktails. Portions are hearty, flavours rich. Standouts include *steak au poivre* and spaghetti with clams, but you really can't go wrong.

### Le Cien des Cigales

PROVENÇAL €

(Map p762; www.leclandescigales.com; 8 rue du Petit Puits, 2e; mains €9-11; ☺9am-7pm Mon-Sat; ☞Joliette, ☞Sadi-Carnot) On Fridays this little café serves classic homemade aioli (a traditional Provençal garlic mayonnaise) with cod, winkles, poached vegetables and hard-boiled eggs. Savoury tarts are great when wandering the Panier.

### Le Moment

CONTEMPORARY €€€

(Map p762; ☎04 91 52 47 49; www.lemoment-marseille.com; 5 place Sadi Carnot, 2e; lunch menus €19-25, dinner menus €46-64; ☺Tue-Sat, Mon lunch; ☞Colbert, ☞Sadi-Carnot) Marseille's new gastronomic hotshot, Christian Ernst, also gives cooking classes (€59) at his sophisticated restaurant.

### Une Table au Sud

CONTEMPORARY MEDITERRANEAN €€€

(Map p762; ☎04 91 90 63 53; www.unetableau-sud.com; 2 quai du Port, 2e; lunch menus €33-47, dinner menus €68-125; ☺Tue-Sat; ☞Vieux Port) It was the *milkshake de bouilleabaisse* that clinched it for us; Vieux Port's top table has one Michelin star.

### Le Femina

ALGERIAN €€

(Map p762; ☎04 91 54 03 56; 1 rue de Musée, 1er; menus €16; ☺Tue-Sat; ☞Noailles, ☞Canebière Garibaldi) Succulent couscous since 1921.

### Le Souk

MOROCCAN €€

(Map p762; ☎04 91 91 29 29; 100 quai du Port, 2e; menus €20-30; ☺Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; ☞Vieux Port) Standout Moroccan, with great *tagines* (slow-cooked stews) and honey-nut pastries.

### La Nautique

FRENCH €€

(Map p762; ☎04 91 33 01 78; opposite 20 quai de Rive Neuve, 7e; mains €13-18) Grilled fish



and steaks with a view; ideal on Sundays, when others close.

### Simply Food

ORGANIC FOOD €

(Map p762; 16 rue du jeune Anacharsis, 1er; mains €4-6; ☎9am-7pm Mon-Sat; Vieux Port) Organic salads, smoothies, wraps, sandwiches and soups.

### Pain & Cie

CAFÉ €

(Map p762; place aux Huiles, 1er; brunch €21; ☎Tue-Sat 8am-10.30pm, to 6pm Sun & Mon; Vieux Port) Trendy spot for weekend brunch, quick sandwiches, cake or coffee.

### O'Stop

SNACK STAND €

(Map p762; 15 rue St-Saëns, 1er; menus €10; ☎24hr; Vieux Port) Order the *boulettes de viandes* (meatball) sandwich with fries: dechish.

### Café Debout

CAFÉ €

(Map p762; 46 rue Francis Davso, 1er; ☎8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat; Vieux Port) Good for people-watching as you recharge on espresso, chocolates and cake.

### Self-Catering

See p769 for more markets. Find supermarkets in the concrete **Centre Bourse shopping centre** (Map p762).

### Marché des Capucins

MARKET €

(Map p762; place des Capucins, 1er; ☎8am-7pm Mon-Sat; Noailles, Canebière Garibaldi) One block south of La Canebière.

### Fruit & Vegetable Market

MARKET €

(Map p762; cours Pierre Puget, 6e; ☎8am-1pm Mon-Fri; Estrangin Préfecture)

### Fish Market

FISH MARKET €

(Map p762; quai des Belges; ☎8am-1pm; Vieux Port) Small but picturesque fixture at the Vieux Port.

### Four des Navettes

BAKERY €

(Map p758; 136 rue Sainte, 7e) Marseille's iconic boat-shaped, orange-flower Navette biscuits.

### Pain de l'Opéra

BAKERY €

(Map p762; 61 rue Francis Davso, 1er; Vieux Port) The best pastries near the Vieux Port; also has to-go savoury foods.

### Le Glacier du Roi

ICE CREAMERY €

(Map p762; 4 place de Lenche, 2e) Fantastic homemade Italian ice cream.



### Drinking

Cafés and bars surround the Vieux Port. Students and artists congregate near cours Julien and its surrounding streets. Sundays are dead.



### La Caravelle

CAFÉ, BAR

(Map p762; 34 quai du Port, 2e; ☎7am-2am; Vieux Port) Look up or miss this standout, upstairs hideaway, styled with rich wood and leather, zinc bar and yellowing vintage murals. If it's warm, snag a coveted spot on the portside terrace. On Friday, live jazz plays 9pm to midnight.

### La Part des Anges

WINE BAR

(Map p762; 33 rue Sainte; mains €15; ☎lunch Mon-Sat, dinner nightly) The wine list at this happening wine bar and restaurant is an oenologist's dream. Great cheese and charcuterie plates.

### Dame Noir

BAR

(Map p758; 30 place Notre Dame de Mont, 6e; ☎5pm-2am Tue-Sat; Notre Dame du Mont-Cours Julien) A crowd of hip cats spills onto the sidewalk from this neighbourhood bar. DJs spin Thursday to Saturday. No sign; look for the red lights by the door.

### Au Petit Nice

CAFÉ, BAR

(Map p758; 28 place Jean Jaurès, 6e; ☎10am-2am; Notre Dame du Mont-Cours Julien) Cheap and cheerful: €2 beers in a happening courtyard café with a youthful, diverse crowd. (NB: If you're taking a taxi, this is *not* the hotel of the same name.)

### Le Bar de la Marine

BAR

(Map p762; 15 quai de Rive Neuve, 7e; ☎7am-1am; Vieux Port) Marcel Pagnol filmed the card-party scenes in *Marius* at this Marseille institution, which draws folks from every walk of life.

### Cup of Tea

TEA SALON €

(Map p762; 1 rue Caisserie, 2e; ☎8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat; Sadi-Carnot) Cute café with 55 tea varieties, and good Corsican beer.



### Entertainment

Cultural events are covered in *L'Hebdo* (in French; €1.20), available around town, or [www.marseillebynight.com](http://www.marseillebynight.com) (in French).

Tickets for most events are sold at *billetteries* (ticket counters) including **Fnac** (Map p762; Centre Bourse shopping centre; Vieux Port) and the tourist office.

### Olympique de Marseille

FOOTBALL

Marseille's cherished football team plays at **Stade Vélodrome** (3 bd Michelet, 8e; Rond Point du Prado). Buy tickets at **OM's Boutique Officielle** (Map p762; ☎04 91 33 20 01; 44 La Canebière, 1er; ☎10am-7pm Mon-Sat; Noailles, Canebière Garibaldi) for as little as €20.



**Opéra Municipal de Marseille**

OPERA

(Map p762; ☎04 91 55 11 10; <http://opera.mairie-marseille.fr>; 2 rue Molière, 1er; Vieux Port) Season runs September to June.

**Live Music & Nightclubs****Pelle Mêle**

JAZZ CLUB

(Map p762; 8 place aux Huiles, 1er; ☎6pm-1am, closed Sun Oct-Apr; Vieux Port) A thirty-something crowd gives to good jazz at this lively portside bistro.

**L'Intermédiaire**

DIVE CLUB

(Map p758; 63 place Jean Jaurès, 6e; ☎7pm-2am; Notre Dame du Mont-Cours Julien) Grungy venue with graffitied walls is one of the best for live bands or DJs (usually techno or alternative).

**La Noche**

NIGHTCLUB

(Map p762; [www.lanocheclub.com](http://www.lanocheclub.com); 40 rue plan Fourmiguier, 7e; ☎Fri & Sat) Downstairs, bands play; upstairs, DJs spin everything from electro to salsa.

**Le Trolleybus**

DANCE CLUB

(Map p762; 24 quai de Rive Neuve, 7e; ☎Wed-Sat; Vieux Port) Shake it to techno, funk and indie at this tunnel-like harbourside club.

**Au Son des Guitars**

NIGHTCLUB

(Map p762; 18 rue Corneille, 1er; ☎Thu-Sun; Vieux Port) Popular with Corsican locals, this small club has limited dancing, lots of drinking, and occasionally a Corsican singer. Look sharp to get in.

**Ma Demoiselle**

NIGHTCLUB

(Map p762; 8 rue Corneille, 1er; Vieux Port) Visiting DJs sometimes play this tiny downstairs girly-girl club.

**Gay & Lesbian Venues**

The website [www.gaymapmarseille.com](http://www.gaymapmarseille.com) has general coverage of Marseille's and Aix-en-Provence's gay life. Marseille's small scene is a moving target, and only coalesces weekends. Gay nights happen at various bars, which are generally straight or mixed other nights.

**Caffè Noir** (Map p762; 3 rue Moustier, 1er) and **Polikarpov** (Map p762; 24 cours Honoré d'Estienne d'Orves, 1er Vieux Port) are reliable addresses for a young, mixed, hard-drinking crowd. Skip Cargo, Caffè Noir's adjoining sauna, whose steam room has an exposed steam vent, on which a number of people have reported burning their legs. The better *hammam* is **XY Le Club** (Map p762; [www.xy-leclub.com](http://www.xy-leclub.com); 66 rue Montgrand, 6e; ☎1.30pm-midnight Mon, Tue, Thu, 1.30pm-2am

Wed, Fri-Sun; Estrangin-Préfecture), which only gets busy Sunday afternoons; sometimes it throws mixed parties. Friendly door staff are an excellent resource for what's happening now. Catch-as-catch-can bar **Le Trash** ([www.trash-bar.com](http://www.trash-bar.com); 28 rue du Berceau, 5e; ☎Fri-Wed; Baille) is as its name suggests.

**Shopping**

You'll find artisan specialities in streets surrounding the Vieux Port, especially in Le Panier.

**La Maison du Pastis**

DISTILLERY

(Map p762; ☎04 91 90 86 77; 108 quai du Port) Sample over 90 varieties of the region's speciality, pastis (an aniseed-flavoured aperitif), or try absinthe.

**Librairie de la Bourse**

BOOKS

(Map p762; 8 rue Paradis, 1er; Vieux Port) Range of maps and Lonely Planet guides.

**Prado Market**

MARKET

(Map p758; ☎8am-1pm; Castellane or Périer) This daily market stretches from the Castellane metro station along av du Prado to the Périer metro station, with a staggering array of clothes, fruit and speciality items. Flower market Friday morning.

**Markets**

MARKETS

(Map p758; cours Julien; ☎8am-7pm; Notre Dame du Mont-Cours Julien) Wednesday-morning organic fruit and vegetable market and an Aladdin's cave bric-a-brac market every second Sunday of the month.

**Information****Dangers & Annoyances**

Marseille isn't a hotbed of violent crime, but petty crimes and muggings are commonplace. Play it cool. Don't get visibly drunk and stumble home alone at 4am; you may as well wear a target. The tourist office advice is to take taxis at night.

If you're nervous, avoid the Belsunce area (southwest of the train station, bounded by La Canebière, cours Belsunce and rue d'Aix, rue Bernard du Bois and bd d'Athènes). Walking the Canebière is annoying, but generally not dangerous; expect to encounter kids peddling hash.

Solo women travellers should be warned that they will get catcalls from passing strangers.

**Emergency**

**Préfecture de Police** (☎04 91 39 80 00; place de la Préfecture, 1er; ☎24hr; Estrangin Préfecture)



## SHOPPING LE PANIER

The Panier is home to many of the city's artisans and craftspeople, and by far the most fun for stocking up on gifts. Pick up the essential *savon de Marseille* (locally made olive-oil soap) at **La Compagnie de Provence** (1 rue Caisserie) or gorgeous AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée; a guarantee that products originate from a specific region) Provençal olive oils, and jars of tapenade and aioli at **Place aux Huiles** (2 place Daviel). Brilliantly scented olive soaps, some with chocolate and tomato leaf, and lip-smacking preserves fill **72% Pétanque** (10 rue du Petit Puits). Nearby a clutch of ceramic ateliers have shops attached; wander in and say *bonjour*.

## Internet Access

**Info Café** (☎04 91 33 74 98; 1 quai de Rive Neuve, 1er; per hr €3; ☉9am-10pm Mon-Sat, 2.30-7.30pm Sun; 🚶Vieux Port) Also fax.

## Medical Services

**Hôpital de la Timone** (☎04 91 38 60 00; 264 rue St-Pierre, 5e; 🚶La Timone) East of city centre.

## Money

**Canebière Change** (39 La Canebière, 1er; ☉8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon & 2-4.30pm Sat; 🚶Vieux Port)

## Post

**Main post office** (1 place de l'Hôtel des Postes, 1er; 🚶Colbert) Currency exchange.

## Tourist Information

**Maison de la Région** (61 La Canebière, 1er; 11am-6pm Mon-Sat; 🚶Vieux Port)

**Tourist office** (☎04 91 13 89 00; www.marseille-tourisme.com; 4 La Canebière, 1er; ☉9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun; 🚶Vieux Port)

## Websites

**2013 European Capital of Culture** (www.marseille-provence2013.fr)

## i Getting There &amp; Away

## Air

**Aéroport Marseille-Provence** (MRS; ☎04 42 14 14 14; www.marseille.aeroport.fr) Also called Aéroport Marseille-Marignane; 25km northwest of town in Marignane.

## Boat

The **passenger-ferry terminal** (www.marseille-port.fr; 🚶Joliette) is 250m south of place de la Joliette (1er).

**Algérie Ferries** (☎04 91 90 89 28; 58 bd des Dames, 2e; ☉9am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri; 🚶Colbert)

**Société Nationale Maritime Corse-Méditerranée** (www.sncm.fr; 61 bd des Dames, 2e; ☉8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon

& 2-5.30pm Sat; 🚶Joliette) Links Marseille with Corsica, Sardinia, Algeria and Tunisia.

## Bus

The **bus station** (3 rue Honnorat, 3e; 🚶Gare St-Charles SNCF) is at the back of the train station. Purchase tickets from the information desk inside the train station or from the driver.

**Aix-en-Provence** €4.90, 35 to 60 minutes, every five to 10 minutes

**Avignon** €18.50, two hours, one daily

**Cannes** €25, two hours, up to three daily

**Carpentras** €14, two hours, three daily

**Nice** €27, three hours, up to three daily

Services to some destinations, including Cassis, use the stop on **place Castellane** (6e; 🚶Castellane), south of the centre. Drivers sell tickets.

**Eurolines** (www.eurolines.com; 3 allées Léon Gambetta; ☉9am-6pm Tue-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon & Sat) has international services (p971).

## Car

At the train station:

**Avis** (☎08 20 61 16 36; www.avis.com)

**Europcar** (☎08 25 82 56 80; www.europcar.com)

## Train

**Gare St-Charles** (Map p758; ☉information 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, tickets 5.15am-10pm) is served by both metro lines. The **left-luggage office** (from €3.50; ☉7.30am-10pm) is next to platform A.

In town, buy tickets at the SNCF Boutique inside the Centre Bourse shopping centre.

From Marseille trains, including TGVs, go all over France and Europe.

**Avignon** €23, 35 minutes, 27 daily

**Lyon** €47, 1¾ hours, 16 daily

**Nice** €30, 2½ hours, 21 daily

**Paris Gare de Lyon** €84, three hours, 21 daily



## Getting Around

For transport information in English:  
[www.lepilote.com](http://www.lepilote.com).

### To/From the Airport



**Navette** ( Marseille 04 91 50 59 34, airport 04 42 14 31 27; [www.lepilote.com](http://www.lepilote.com)) shuttles link to Marseille's train station (€8.50, 25 minutes, every 20 minutes, 5am-11.30pm).

### Bicycle

Pick up/drop off a bike from 100-plus bike stations across the city using **le vélo** ([www.levelo-mpm.fr](http://www.levelo-mpm.fr)) system; it's free the first 30 minutes, costs €1 for the next 30, and then €1 per hour thereafter. You'll need a credit card to register; instructions are in French. Stations dot the cornice to Anse de la Pointe Rouge (8km south of the Vieux Port) and the centre. NB: for deposit, expect a hold on your credit/ATM account card.

### Public Transport

Marseille has two metro lines (Métro 1 and Métro 2), two tram lines (yellow and green) and an extensive bus network, run by the Régie des Transports Marseillais (RTM).

Bus services stop around 9.30pm, when night buses take over until 12.30am. Most start in front of the **Espace Infos RTM** (6 rue des Fabres, 1er;  8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Sat;  Vieux Port), where you can obtain information and transport tickets.

The metro runs 5am to 10.30pm Monday to Thursday, until 12.30am Friday to Sunday; the tram runs between 5am and 1am daily.





Bus, metro or tram tickets (€1.50) can be used on all public transportation for one hour after they've been time-stamped. A pass for one/three days costs €5/10.50.

### WORTH A TRIP

## THE CALANQUES: FRANCE'S NEWEST NATIONAL PARK


Marseille abuts the wild and spectacular **Calanques**, a 20km stretch of high, rocky promontories, rising from brilliant-turquoise Mediterranean waters. The sheer cliffs are occasionally interrupted by small idyllic beaches, some impossible to reach without a kayak. The Marseillais cherish the Calanques, and come to soak up sun or take a long day's hike. The promontories have been protected since 1975, and should be a national park by the time you read this ([www.gipcalanques.fr](http://www.gipcalanques.fr), in French).

The best way to see the Calanques, October to June, is to hike the many maquis-lined trails. During summer trails close because of fire danger: take a boat tour (p761), but be forewarned, they don't stop to let you swim; or try negotiating with a fisherman to take you from the Vieux Port. Otherwise, drive or take public transport.

**Calanque de Sormiou** is the largest rocky inlet. Two seasonal restaurants serve lunch with fabulous views, and require reservations. **Le Château** ( 04 91 25 08 69; mains €18-24;  Apr-mid-Oct) has the best food and **Le Lunch** ( 04 91 25 05 39/37; <http://wp.resto.fr/lelunch>; mains €16-28;  Apr-mid-Oct), the better view. By bus, take the 23 from the Rond Point du Prado metro stop to La Cayolle stop, from where it's a 3km walk. (NB: Diners with reservations are allowed to drive through; otherwise, the road is open to cars weekdays only, September to June.)

Nearer by, head east along Marseille's cornice (waterfront road) to its end, **Calle-longue**, an idyllic fishing port where you can fuel up on crispy-crust pizzas or a proper fish lunch at **Restaurant La Grotte** ([www.lagrotte-13.com](http://www.lagrotte-13.com); 1 Ave des Pébrons; menus €12-22) before hitting the trail. By bus: from Rond Point du Prado metro stop, take Bus 19 to the route's end, then transfer to Bus 20.

Marseille's tourist office leads guided walks (no kids under eight) of the Calanques, and has information about trail closures. Wear sturdy shoes. A coastal walk from Cassis to Morgiou, embracing the main six calanques (about 15km), takes 5½ to 6½ hours.

If you have a car, the nearby village of **Cassis** makes a postcard-perfect day trip. After a glorious morning driving above aquamarine coves, plan to lunch, with an obligatory bottle of crisp Cassis white, at one of the portside restaurants. **Cassis' tourist office** ([www.ot-cassis.com](http://www.ot-cassis.com); quai des Moulins;  9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sat) supplies free maps of cellars open for tastings.



**Taxi Radio Marseille** ( 04 91 02 20 20)

## Aix-en-Provence

POP 146.700

Aix-en-Provence is to Provence what the Left Bank is to Paris: an enclave of bourgeois-bohemian chic. It's hard to believe Aix (pronounced 'ex') is just 25km from chaotic, exotic Marseille, and it's no surprise the two remain at odds. Some

30,000 students from the Université de Provence Aix-Marseille, many from overseas, set the mood on the street: bars, cafés and affordable restaurants. The city is rich in culture (two of Aix's most famous sons are Paul Cézanne and Émile Zola) and oh-so respectable, with plane-tree-shaded boulevards and fancy-pants boutiques. Were it not for all those kids, Aix would be stuffy.

 **Sights & Activities**

**Vieil Aix**

HISTORIC QUARTER

Art, culture and architecture abound in Aix and is a stroller's paradise, especially the mostly pedestrian old city, **Viell Aix**.

## Aix-en-Provence





The graceful **cours Mirabeau** is the heart of Aix. Cafés spill onto the sidewalks on the sunny northern side. The southern side shelters a string of elegant Renaissance *hôtels particuliers* (private mansions). The mossy **fontaine d'Eau Thermale**, at the intersection of cours Mirabeau and rue du 4 Septembre, spouts 34°C water, a pleasant hint of what awaits at the **Thermes Sextius** (thermal spa; ☎04 42 23 81 82; www.thermes-sextius.com; 55 av des Thermes; day pass €40).

South of cours Mirabeau, **Quartier Mazarin** was laid out in the 17th century, and is home to some of Aix' finest buildings. Further south still is the peaceful **parc Jourdan**, dominated by Aix' largest fountain and home to the town's **Boulodrome Municipal**, where locals gather beneath plane trees to play *pétanque*.

For more greenery (dry maquis, actually), the nearby **Montagne Ste-Victoire** offers dozens of walking and cycling tracks. The tourist office sells the excellent *Mon-*

*tagne Ste-Victoire* map (€4.50), with 24 detailed itineraries.

## Musée Granet

ART MUSEUM

(www.musee-granet-aix-en-provence.fr, in French; place St-Jean de Malte; adult/child €4/free; ☎11am-7pm Tue-Sun) Housed in a 17th-century Knights of Malta priory, the museum's pride and joy are its nine Cézanne paintings. The unique De Cézanne à Giacometti collection features works by Picasso, Léger, Matisse, Tal Coat and Giacometti, among others. There are also extensive 16th- to 20th-century Italian, Flemish and French collections and rotating exhibitions.



## Fondation Victor Vasarely

CONTEMPORARY ART

(www.fondationvasarely.fr; 1 av Marcel Pagnol; adult/child €9/6; ☎10am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun) This thrilling centre, 4km west of the city, was designed by the optical art innovator himself, in a series of repeating triangles and hexagons, right down to the honeycomb ceiling glass. Though in need of

## Aix-en-Provence

### 📍 Top Sights

Cathédrale St-Sauveur .....	B1
Musée Granet .....	D4
Vieil Aix .....	C2

### 📍 Sights

1 Fontaine d'Eau Thermale .....	C3
2 Thermes Sextius .....	A1

### Activities, Courses & Tours

3 Boulodrome Municipal .....	C5
4 Mini-Tram .....	B4

### 🛏 Sleeping

5 Hôtel Cardinal .....	D4
6 Hôtel Cardinal (Annexe) .....	D4
7 Hôtel Cézanne .....	B5
8 Hôtel Concorde .....	D4
9 Hôtel des Quatre Dauphins .....	C4
10 Hôtel Saint-Christophe .....	B4
11 La Petite Maison de Carla .....	C1
12 L'Épicerie .....	A2

### 🍴 Eating

13 Amphitryon .....	B3
14 Boulangerie .....	C3
Brasserie Léopold .....	(see 10)
15 Charlotte .....	A3
16 Confiserie Léonard Parli .....	B5
17 La Boulangerie du Coin .....	C1

18 La Chimère Café .....	A3
19 La Poivre d'Ane .....	B2
20 La Tomate Verte .....	B3
21 Le Petit Verdot .....	A3
22 Monoprix .....	B3
23 Petit Casino .....	D4

### 🍷 Drinking

24 La Belle Époque .....	C3
25 Le Med Boy .....	A2
26 Les Deux Garçons .....	C3
27 L'Orienté .....	B2
28 L'Unic .....	B2

### 🎬 Entertainment

29 Ciné Mazarin .....	B4
30 Cinéma Renoir .....	C4
31 Le Mistral .....	C4
32 Le Cézanne .....	B4

### 🛍 Shopping

33 Book in Bar .....	C4
34 Cave du Félibrige .....	B2
35 Flea Market .....	C3
36 Food & Flower Market .....	C2
37 Flower Market .....	B2
38 Librairie Goulard .....	C3
39 Paradox Librairie Internationale .....	C4
40 Produce Market .....	B2





## AIX-CELLENT

Brilliant savings come in the form of the **Aix City Pass**, which costs €15, lasts five days and includes admission to Atelier Paul Cézanne, Bastide du Jas de Bouffan and Musée Granet, as well as a trip on the mini-tram and one of the tourist office's guided walks. Buy it at the tourist office or the two Cézanne sights.

repairs, the building is a masterpiece: 16 interconnecting six-walled galleries, purpose-built to display and reflect the patterning of the artist's acid-trip-ready, floor-to-ceiling geometric artworks. Take bus 4 or 6 to the Vasarely stop.

### Cathédrale St-Sauveur

CATHEDRAL

(rue Laroque; ☎8am-noon & 2-6pm) Built between 1285 and 1350 in a potpourri of styles, the cathedral includes a Romanesque 12th-century nave in its southern aisle; chapels from the 14th and 15th centuries; and a 5th-century sarcophagus in the apse. More recent additions include the 18th-century gilt baroque organ. The acoustics make Gregorian chants (4.30pm Sunday) unforgettable.

### Cézanne Sights

ART APPRECIATION

His star may have reached its greatest heights after his death, but the life of local lad Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) is treasured in Aix. To see where he ate, drank, studied and painted, follow the **Circuit de Cézanne** (Cézanne Trail), marked by footpath-embedded bronze plaques inscribed with the letter C. An informative English-language guide to the plaques, *Cézanne's Footsteps*, is available free from the tourist office.

Though none of his works hang here, Cézanne's last studio, **Atelier Paul Cézanne** ([www.atelier-cezanne.com](http://www.atelier-cezanne.com); 9 av Paul Cézanne; adult/student €5.50/2; ☎10am-noon & 2-6pm, closed Sun winter), 1.5km north of the tourist office on a hilltop, is a must for any Cézanne fan. It's painstakingly preserved as it was at the time of his death, strewn with his tools and still-life models; his admirers claim this is where Cézanne is most present. Take bus 1 or 20 to the Atelier Cézanne stop, or walk (20 minutes) from the centre.

The other two main Cézanne sights in Aix are the **Bastide du Jas de Bouffan** (on the western fringes of the city), the former

family home where Cézanne started painting as a young man, and the **Bibémus quarries**, where he did most of his Montagne Ste-Victoire paintings. Head to the tourist office for bookings (required) and information.



## Tours

### Tourist Office

TOURS

The tourist office has DIY **walking itineraries** and runs a packed schedule of **guided walking** (€8) or **bus tours** (from €28) in English, like Retracing Cézanne's Steps. Bus tours include Luberon and Alpilles.

### Mini-Tram

TRAM

(☎06 11 54 27 73; [www.cpts.fr](http://www.cpts.fr), in French; €6) Leaves from place du Général de Gaulle and winds its way through the Quartier Mazarin, along cours Mirabeau, and around Vieil Aix. Multilingual.



## Festivals & Events

The tourist office has a list of Aix's seemingly continuous festivals.

### Rencontres du 9ème Art

ANIMATION

([www.bd-aix.com](http://www.bd-aix.com), in French) Comic books, animation and cartoons; March.

### Festival International d'Art Lyrique d'Aix-en-Provence

PERFORMING ARTS

(International Festival of Lyrical Art; [www.festival-aix.com](http://www.festival-aix.com)) The highlight of Aix's sumptuous cultural calendar. This month-long festival brings classical music, opera and buskers; July.

### Festival de le Roque d'Anthéron

PIANO MUSIC

([www.festival-piano.com](http://www.festival-piano.com)) From Aix to the Luberon; mid-July to mid-August.



## Sleeping

The tourist office lists *chambres d'hôte* and *gîtes ruraux* (self-contained holiday cottages). Bookings are coordinated through the **Centrale de Réservation** (☎04 42 16 11 84; [www.aixenprovencetourism.com](http://www.aixenprovencetourism.com)).



### Hôtel Cardinal

SMALL HOTEL €

(☎04 42 38 32 30; [www.hotel-cardinal-aix.com](http://www.hotel-cardinal-aix.com); 24 rue Cardinale; s/d/ste €60/70/110, self-catering ste €110) Beneath stratospheric ceilings, Hôtel Cardinal's 29 romantic rooms are beautifully furnished with antiques, tasselled curtains and newly tiled bathrooms. The choice picks are the six gigantic suites located in the annexe (about



100m further up the street), each with a kitchenette and dining room, ideal for longer stays.

### Hôtel Cézanne

BOULIQUE HOTEL €€€

(04 42 91 11 11; <http://cezanne.hotelalix.com>; 40 av Victor Hugo; d €179-249; ④ ⑤ ⑥) Aix's hippest hotel is a study in clean lines, with sharp-edged built-in desks and love seats that feel a touch Ikea. We actually prefer the less expensive 'luxe' rooms, which have the same top-end linens, but more charm, with Provençal-style painted furniture; alas, you'll sacrifice the deep soaking tub. Best is breakfast (€19), which includes smoked salmon and Champagne. Free parking.

### Hôtel Saint-Christophe

FULL-SERVICE HOTEL €€

(04 42 26 01 24; [www.hotel-saintchristophe.com](http://www.hotel-saintchristophe.com); 2 av Victor Hugo; s €82-108, d €89-117, ste €128-152; ④ ⑤ ⑥) The Saint-Christophe is a proper hotel, with a big lobby and helpful staff. Rooms nod to Art Deco in their styling, and have the standard midbudget amenities, including good bathrooms; some have terraces, some can sleep four. Parking (€12) by reservation. On-site **Brasserie Léopold** (mains €15-20) is a sure bet for *steak-frites*.

### L'Épicerie

B&B €€

(06 08 85 38 68; [www.unechambreenville.eu](http://www.unechambreenville.eu); 12 rue du Cancel; s €80-120, d €100-130; ④ ⑤) This intimate B&B is the fabulous creation of born-and-bred Aixois lad, Luc. His breakfast room re-creates a 1950s grocery store, and the flowery garden out back is perfect for evening dining (book ahead). Morning meals are veritable feasts. Two rooms accommodate families of four.

### Hôtel les Quatre Dauphins

SMALL HOTEL €€

(04 42 38 16 39; [www.lesquatredauphins.fr](http://www.lesquatredauphins.fr); 54 rue Roux Alphéran; s €55-60, d €70-85; ④ ⑤) Close to cours Mirabeau, this sweet 13-room hotel, a former private mansion, was redone in 2010 and looks fresh and clean, with new bathrooms and rainfall showerheads. The tall terracotta-tiled staircase (no lift) leads to four attic rooms, with sloped beamed ceilings.

### La Petite Maison de Carla

B&B €€

(04 42 21 20 73, 06 74 18 60 98; [www.la-petite-maison-de-carla.com](http://www.la-petite-maison-de-carla.com); 7 rue du Puits Neuf; s €60-75, d €75-90, ste €130-150; ⑤) Better known as Chez Carla or Chez Maria (they're sisters), this five-room B&B occupies an 18th-century town house, painted in earthy colours, with flowers throughout. Each room

is different; best is the Manuela suite, with jacuzzi, open kitchen and roof terrace.

### Auberge de Jeunesse du Jas de Bouffan

HOSTEL €

(04 42 20 15 99; [www.auberge-jeunesse-aix.fr](http://www.auberge-jeunesse-aix.fr); 3 av Marcel Pagnol; dm incl breakfast & sheets €19-22; ④ reception 7am-2.30pm & 4.30pm-midnight, closed mid-Dec-Jan; ⑤) Shiny new with bar, tennis, secure bike shed and massive summer barbecues, this HI hostel is 2km west of the centre. Too bad the motorway is just below... Take Bus 4 from La Rotonde to the Vasarely stop.

### Camping Arc-en-Ciel

CAMPGROUND €

(04 42 26 14 28; [www.campingarcenciel.com](http://www.campingarcenciel.com); rte de Nice; site for 2 plus car €19; ④ Apr-Sep; ⑤ ⑥) Tranquil wooded hills out back, but a busy motorway in front. It's 2km south-east of town, at Pont des Trois Sautets. Take Bus 3 to Les Trois Sautets stop.

### Hôtel Concorde

MIDSIZE HOTEL €

(04 42 26 03 95; 68 bd du Roi René; d without bath €52, with bath €62-90; ④ ⑤) Ask for a room in the back ('sur jardin') to avoid being roared to sleep by incessant traffic. Rooms are functional and basic; 10 have small balconies, and higher-priced rooms come with air-con. Parking €8.



### Eating

Aix's culinary scene reflects the city itself: classic, not too risky. Restaurants on cours Mirabeau are overpriced.

### Le Poivre d'Ane

CONTEMPORARY €€

(04 42 21 32 66; [www.restaurantlepoivredane.com](http://www.restaurantlepoivredane.com); 40 place des Cardeurs; menus €28-45; ④ dinner Thu-Tue) Poivre d'Ane isn't afraid to break ranks with culinary norms: fancy a haddock milkshake, duck sushi, or thyme-and-cinnamon apple tart with Baileys whipped cream? The 10-table dining room's decor is austere, save for splashes of bold colour, reflecting the chef's playfulness. In summer outdoor tables are smack dab on one of Aix's loveliest pedestrian squares. Reservations essential.

### Amphitryon

PROVENÇAL FRENCH €€

(04 42 26 54 10; [www.restaurant-amphitryon.fr](http://www.restaurant-amphitryon.fr); 2-4 rue Paul Doumer; lunch menus €25, dinner menus €30-40; ④ Tue-Sat) Run by fiery duo maître d' Patrice Lesné and chef Bruno Ungaro, Amphitryon enjoys a solid reputation among Aix's bourgeoisie, particularly in summer for its market-driven cooking and alfresco dining in the cloister-garden. The



## CULINARY DETOUR: VENTABREN

A lesser-known hilltop village, Ventabren (population 5000), 16km west of Aix, provides the perfect lazy-day detour. Meander sun-dappled cobbled lanes; peep inside a 17th-century church; and take in panoramic views of Provence from the ruins of **Château de la Reine Jeanne** before a superb lunch or dinner at **La Table de Ventabren** (☎04 42 28 79 33; www.latabledeventabren.com; 1 rue Cézanne; menus €41-50; ☺lunch Wed-Sun, dinner Tue-Sun), reason enough to visit. The terrace looks out to distant mountains, magical on starry summer evenings. Chef Dan Bessoudo, who recently received a coveted Michelin star, creates inventive, wholly modern French dishes and knockout desserts. Get here before the prices double. Reservations essential.

attached **Comptoir de l'Amphi** (mains €12-17) is a less expensive alternative.

**La Tomate Verte** CONTEMPORARY PROVENÇAL €€ (☎04 42 60 04 58; www.latomateverte.com, in French; 15 rue des Tanneurs; lunch/dinner menus €19/29; ☺Tue-Sat) The house speciality at this apple-green bistro is green-tomato tart, a tangy-delicious lead to the Provençal comfort food, simple as roast lamb with rosemary and garlic. Tile floors mean noise; if that matters, choose a table in the side dining room.

**Le Petit Verdot** PROVINCIAL FRENCH €€ (☎04 42 27 30 12; www.lepetitverdot.fr; 7 rue Entrecasteaux; mains €15-25; ☺dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sat) Wine is the primary focus at this earthy restaurant, where tabletops are made of cast-off wine crates. The meat-heavy menu is designed to marry with the wines, not the other way round. It's fun when you're feeling festive, but decibel levels are too high for a romantic night out.

**Charlotte** NEIGHBOURHOOD BISTRO €€ (☎04 42 26 77 56; 32 rue des Bernardines; 2-/3-course menus €15/18; ☺Tue-Sat) Townspeople congregate like extended family at this bustling, cheek-by-jowl neighbourhood restaurant, which turns out simple home cooking, including terrines, homemade

soups, grilled meat and savoury tarts, from its open kitchen. In summer, feast in the garden.

**La Chimère Café** SUPPER CLUB €€ (☎04 42 38 30 00; www.lachimerecafe.com; 15 rue Bruyes; menus €28-32) Aix's party crowd laps up the cabaret atmosphere of this former nightclub: starry-night vaulted ceiling in the underground room; grand chandeliers with crimson, velvety furnishings on the main floor. On the plate, the food is good, classic French. Come when you feel like donning heels and making a night of it.

**Self-Catering**  
Aix is blessed with bountiful markets (p777).

**La Boulangerie du Coin** BAKERY € (4 rue Boulegon; ☺Tue-Sun) Bakes on Sunday.

**Boulangerie** BAKERY € (5 rue Tournefort; ☺24hr)

**Monoprix** SUPERMARKET € (24 cours Mirabeau; ☺8.30am-9pm Mon-Sat)

**Petit Casino** SUPERMARKET € (rue d'Italie; ☺9am-7pm Mon-Sat)



## Drinking

The scene is fun, but fickle. The areas around rue de la Verrerie and place Richelme are prime for nightlife. Listings on the website www.marseillebynight.com (in French) also cover Aix. Open-air cafés crowd the city's squares, especially place des Cardeurs, place de Verdun and place de l'Hôtel de Ville.

**La Belle Époque** BAR (29 cours Mirabeau; ☺7am-2am) Swanky, purple and fluoro-lit, it's a favourite of happening DJs and students. It's 'appy 'our between 7pm and 9pm, with two-for-one drinks.

**L'Unic** BAR, CAFÉ (40 rue de Vauvenargues; ☺6am-2am) On one of the town's most charming squares, timeless and reliable, it serves anything from breakfast to aperitifs. Pensioners love it for the postmarket slot; students crowd it to kick-start their evening.

**Le Med Boy** GAY BAR (www.med-boy.com; 6 rue de la Paix; ☺9.30pm-2am) Aix's only gay bar packs in stand-and-drink twenty-somethings.

**Les Deux Garçons** CAFÉ (53 cours Mirabeau; ☺7am-2am) Cézanne and Zola once lingered in this classic



brasserie/café, but it rests on its laurels: best for a drink or small bite.

### L'Orienthé

LOUNGE

(5 rue de Félibre Gaut; ☎1pm-1am) A *Thousand and One Nights* soft-lit den ideal for lounge music, *sheeshas* (water pipes) and teas.



## Entertainment

*Le Mois à Aix* (free from the tourist office) reports what's on.

### Nightclubs

#### Le Mistral

NIGHTCLUB

(3 rue Frédéric Mistral; ☎midnight-6am Tue-Sat) If anyone's awake past midnight, chances are they'll wind up at this happening basement club, with three bars and a dance floor. DJs spin house, R&B, techno and rap. For a table, buy a bottle.

### Cinemas

Aix's student population ensures great cinema, from Oscar contenders to cult flicks, often in English. Consult [www.lescinemasaisois.com](http://www.lescinemasaisois.com) (in French). Cinemas: **Ciné Mazarin** (6 rue Laroque), **Cinéma Renoir** (24 cours Mirabeau), **Le Cézanne** (1 rue Marcel Guillaume).

### Theatre

#### Grand Théâtre de Provence

THEATRE

(☎04 42 91 69 70; [www.legrandtheatre.net](http://www.legrandtheatre.net); 380 Av Max Juvénal) State-of-the-art, 1380-seat theatre; presents musical performances and opera.

#### Le Ballet Preljocaj

BALLET

(☎04 42 93 48 00; [www.preljocaj.org](http://www.preljocaj.org); 530 Av Mozart) Performs at the 650-seat Pavillon Noir.



## Shopping

Aix's most chic shops cluster along pedestrian rue Marius Reynaud and cours Mirabeau. The newly developed **Allées de Provence** (bordered by av Guiseppe Verdi, av Mozart and av Max Juvénal) has chain stores like Fnac, H&M and Sephora.

### Cave du Félibrige

WINE

([www.aix-en-provence.com/cave-felibrige](http://www.aix-en-provence.com/cave-felibrige); 18 rue des Cordeliers) Splendid array of wines, some *very* expensive.

### Book in Bar

ENGLISH BOOKS

(4 rue Cabassol) Best selection of English-language books; has a great café.

### Librairie Goulard

BOOKS

(37 cours Mirabeau) Best selection of Lonely Planet guides.

### Paradox Librairie Internationale

BOOKS, GROCERY

(15 rue du 4 Septembre) English-language fiction and British grocery (Heinz tomato soup, Quavers and digestive biscuits, it's all here!).

### Produce Market

MARKET

(place Richelme) Each morning, tables display olives, lavender, honey, melons and other sun-kissed products.

### Food Market

FOOD MARKET

(place des Prêcheurs) Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings.

### Flower Market

FLOWER MARKETS

Rainbows of flowers fill place des Prêcheurs on Sunday mornings and place de l'Hôtel de Ville on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings.

### Flea Market

FLEA MARKET

(place de Verdun; ☎Tue, Thu & Sat mornings) Quirky vintage items.

## Information

**Centre Hospitalier du Pays d'Aix** (☎04 42 33 50 00; [www.ch-aix.fr](http://www.ch-aix.fr), in French; av des Tamaris) Medical services.

**Change Nazareth** (7 rue Nazareth; ☎9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, open Sun Jun-Sep) Changes money. Inside a jewellery shop.

**Netgames** (52 rue Aumône Vieille; per hr €3; ☎10am-midnight) Internet access.

**Police station** (☎04 42 93 97 00; 10 av de l'Europe)

**Post office** (place de l'Hôtel de Ville)

**SOS Médecins** (☎04 42 26 24 00) Medical advice.

## SWEET TREAT

Aix's sweetest treat since King René's wedding banquet in 1473 is the marzipan-like local speciality, *calisson d'Aix*, a small, diamond-shaped, chewy delicacy made on a wafer base with ground almonds and fruit syrup, glazed with icing sugar. Traditional *calissonniers* still make them, including **Confiserie Léonard Parli** (☎04 42 26 05 71; [www.leonard-parli.com](http://www.leonard-parli.com); 35 av Victor Hugo), which also offers free guided tours at its onsite factory; call ahead for details.



**Tourist office** ([www.aixenprovencetourism.com](http://www.aixenprovencetourism.com); 2 place du Général de Gaulle; ☎8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Sun) Longer hours in summer; very proactive and helpful.

## Getting There & Away

**AIR Aéroport Marseille-Provence** ([www.marseille.aeroport.fr](http://www.marseille.aeroport.fr)), aka Aéroport Marseille-Marignane, is 25km from Aix-en-Provence and is served by regular shuttle buses.

**BUS Aix' bus station** (av de l'Europe) is a 10-minute walk southwest from La Rotonde. Sunday service is limited. Services include Marseille (€4.90, 35 minutes via the autoroute or one hour via the D8), Arles (€9, 1½ hours), Avignon (€15, 1¼ hours) and Toulon (€10.50, one hour).

**CAR & MOTORCYCLE** Circumnavigating the one-way, three-lane orbital system circling the old town is a nightmare. Street parking spaces are like hen's teeth, but secure, pricier covered parking is plentiful.

**TRAIN Aix' tiny city centre train station** (☎7am-7pm) is at the southern end of av Victor Hugo. It serves Marseille (€7, 50 minutes).

Aix' **TGV station**, 15km from the city centre and accessible by shuttle bus, has many more services. From there it's only 12 minutes to Marseille (€7), with about 20 services a day.

## Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT & TGV STATION

Aix's bus station is linked to both the TGV station (15km outside town; €3.70) and the airport (€8) from 4.40am to 10.30pm, by half-hourly Navette shuttles.

**BUS** La Rotonde is the main bus hub. Most services run until 8pm. A single/10 tickets costs €1/7; a three-day pass €5.

**Aix en Bus** ([www.aixenbus.com](http://www.aixenbus.com), in French) Information desk inside the tourist office.

**Train station** Minibus 2 serves La Rotonde and cours Mirabeau.

**Viell Aix** Diabline electric shuttles cost €0.50.

**TAXI** Outside the bus station.

**Taxi Mirabeau** (☎04 42 21 61 61)

**Taxi Radio Aixois** (☎04 42 27 71 11)

## ARLES & THE CAMARGUE

### Arles

POP 52,400

Arles' poster boy is the celebrated impressionist painter Vincent van Gogh. If you're familiar with his work, you'll be famil-

iar with Arles: the light, the colours, the landmarks, the atmosphere, all faithfully captured.

But long before Van Gogh captured this grand Rhône River locale on canvas, the Romans valued its worth. In 49 BC Arles' prosperity and political standing rose meteorically when it backed a winner in Julius Caesar (who would never meet defeat in his entire career). After Caesar plundered Marseille, which had supported his rival Pompey the Great, Arles eclipsed Marseille as the region's major port. Within a century and a half, it boasted a 12,000-seat theatre and a 20,000-seat amphitheatre to entertain its citizens with gruesome gladiatorial spectacles and chariot races.

Still impressively intact, the two structures now stage events including Arles' famous *ferias* (bull-running festivals), with their controversial lethal bullfights and three-day street parties.

## Sights & Activities

Unless otherwise noted, the last entry to sights is 30 minutes prior to closing. Winter hours are shorter than those listed below; places that close at 7pm in summer usually close at 5pm in winter. The Museon Arlaten is closed for renovations until 2013.

### Roman Monuments

If you're keen to dig into Arles' Roman past, the 'Circuit Romain' combined ticket (€9/7 per adult/child) gives access to the four following sites. The Pass Monument (€13.50/12) accesses all Arles' museums and sites. Buy tickets at the tourist office or any of the sites.

#### Les Arènes

ROMAN AMPHITHEATRE

(adult/student incl Théâtre Antique €6/4.50; ☎9am-7pm) Arles' remarkable Roman amphitheatre, Les Arènes, was built around the late 1st or early 2nd century. It was the venue for chariot races, and gladiatorial displays where slaves and criminals met their demise before jubilant crowds.

During the Arab invasions of early medieval times, the amphitheatre became a fortress. When it was decided in the 1820s to finally return it to its original state, there were still 212 houses and two churches on the site. The amphitheatre is now undergoing restoration, but the polished finish of the renovated walls isn't popular with everyone. Debate is ongoing about what should be done to the metallic structure inside that seats 12,000 during Arles' bullfighting season.





## Arles

## Top Sights

- Fondation Vincent Van Gogh ..... C2  
 Les Arènes ..... C2  
 Théâtre Antique ..... C3

## Sights

- 1 Cloître St-Trophime ..... B3  
 2 Cryptoporticus du Forum ..... B3  
 3 Église St-Trophime ..... B3  
 4 Espace Van Gogh ..... A4  
 5 Les Arènes Bureau de Location ..... C2  
 6 Musée Réattu ..... B1  
 7 Museon Arlaten ..... A3  
 8 Thermes de Constantin ..... B1

## Sleeping

- 9 Grand Hôtel Nord Pinus ..... A3  
 10 Hôtel Arlatan ..... B2  
 11 Hôtel Calendal ..... C3  
 12 Hôtel de l'Amphithéâtre ..... C3

- 13 Hôtel du Musée ..... B1  
 14 Le Bédévère Hôtel ..... D1

## Eating

- Au Jardin du Calendal ..... (see 11)  
 15 Café la Nuit ..... B2  
 16 Comptoir du Sud ..... B3  
 17 Corazon ..... B1  
 18 La Mule Blanche ..... A4  
 19 L'Atelier ..... B3  
 20 Le Cilantro ..... C3

## Drinking

- 21 L'Australien Café Walla Beer ..... A4  
 Oli Pan ..... (see 11)  
 22 Paddy Mullins ..... A4

## Shopping

- 23 Christian Lacroix ..... A3  
 24 Puyricard ..... A3



The **Bureau de Location** (ticket office; ☎08 91 70 03 70; [www.arenas-arles.com](http://www.arenas-arles.com)), on the northern side of the amphitheatre on rond point des Arènes, sells bullfighting and theatre tickets.

Amphitheatre admission is also good for the **Thermes de Constantin** (rue du Grand Prieuré; without amphitheatre adult/student €3.50/2.60; ☉9am-noon & 2-7pm), partly preserved Roman baths near the river, built for Emperor Constantin's private use in the 4th century; and for the **Cryptoporticus du Forum** (entrance via Hôtel de Ville, place de la République; without amphitheatre adult/student €3.50/2.60; ☉9am-noon & 2-7pm May-Sep) 1st-century BC storerooms.

### Théâtre Antique

ROMAN THEATRE

(enter on rue de la Calade; adult/student €3.50/2.60; ☉9am-7pm) Still regularly used for projections and plays, the Théâtre Antique dates from the end of the 1st century BC. For hundreds of years it was used as a convenient source of construction materials, with workers chipping away at the 102m-diameter structure (the remaining column on the right-hand side near the entrance indicates the height of the original arcade).

### Les Alyscamps

NECROPOLIS

(adult/student €3.50/2.60; ☉9am-7pm) Works of Van Gogh and Gauguin feature in this large necropolis, 1km southeast of Les Arènes. Founded by the Romans and taken over by Christians in the 4th century, it became a coveted resting place because of the tombs of martyr St Genest and Arles' first bishops.

### Van Gogh Sights

Although Van Gogh painted around 200 canvases in Arles, not a single one remains here today. There's a certain poetic justice, considering that following his altercation with housemate Paul Gauguin in place Victor Hugo (see boxed text, opposite), a petition was raised by fearful neighbours, and Van Gogh was committed for one month on the mayor's orders.

But Arles has admirably made up for it. Fitting tributes to Van Gogh's art include **Fondation Vincent Van Gogh** (24bis Rond Point des Arènes; adult/student €6/4; ☉10am-7pm), where important modern-day artists, including David Hockney, Francis Bacon and Fernando Botero, pay homage to the artist's distinctive style. The collection and its diversity show just how widely Van

Gogh's influence has been felt in the artistic world.

Temporary art exhibitions regularly take place at **Espace Van Gogh** (place Félix Rey), housed in the former hospital where Van Gogh had his ear stitched and was later locked up (not to be confused with the asylum Monastère St-Paul de Mausole, p781).

The best way to get a sense of Van Gogh's time in Arles is to take the excellent **Van Gogh Trail**, a walking circuit of the city marked by footpath-embedded plaques. Accompanied by a brochure (in English) handed out by the tourist office, the trail takes in spots where Van Gogh set up his easel to paint canvases such as *Starry Night over the Rhône* (1888) and *The Amphitheatre* (1888). At each stop along the circuit, a lectern-style signboard with a reproduction of the painting has interpretative information (also in English).

### Other Sights

#### Église St-Trophime

CHURCH

Arles was an archbishopric from the 4th century until 1790, and this Romanesque-style church was once a cathedral. Built in the late 11th and 12th centuries on the site of several earlier churches, it's named after St Trophime, a late-2nd- or early-3rd-century bishop of Arles. If you look on the far right of the left-hand side of the western portal, you'll see an intricately **sculpted facade** of biblical scenes (more spectacular than the interior), with St Trophime holding a spiral staff in his right hand. Inside the austere church, the most fascinating feature is the **treasury**, containing bone fragments of Arles' bishops who were later canonised. Many of the statues inside were decapitated during the French Revolution.

Across the courtyard, the 12th- and 14th-century **Cloître St-Trophime** (St-Trophime Cloister; adult/student €3.50/2.60; ☉9am-7pm) was built to accommodate the monks' daily lives. It comprises a reading room, dormitory and dining room.

#### Musée de l'Arles et de la Provence Antiques

MUSEUM

(av de la 1ère Division Française; adult/child €5.50/free; ☉9am-7pm Wed-Mon) This museum's striking, state-of-the-art cobalt-blue building perches on the edge of what used to be the Roman chariot racing track (circus), 1.5km southwest of the tourist office. The rich collection of pagan and Christian



## VINCENT

It's easy to forget that Vincent van Gogh was only 37 when he died, as he appears much older in his self-portraits. Born in 1853, the Dutch painter arrived in Arles in 1888 after living in Paris with his younger brother Theo, an art dealer who financially supported Vincent from his own modest income. In Paris he had become acquainted with seminal artists Edgar Degas, Camille Pissarro, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Paul Gauguin.

Revelling in Arles' intense light and bright colours, Van Gogh painted with a burning fervour, unfazed by howling mistrals. During a mistral he would kneel on his canvases and paint horizontally, or lash his easel to iron stakes driven deep into the ground. He sent paintings to Theo for him to try to sell, and dreamed of founding an artists' colony here, but only Gauguin followed up his invitation. Their differing artistic approaches (Gauguin believed in painting from imagination, Van Gogh painting what he saw) and their artistic temperaments came to a head with the argument in December 1888 that led to Van Gogh lopping off part of his own ear.

In May 1889 Van Gogh voluntarily entered an asylum, **Monastère St-Paul de Mauseole** (☎04 90 92 77 00; [www.cloitresaintpaul-valetudo.com](http://www.cloitresaintpaul-valetudo.com), in French; adult/child €4/3; ☀9.30am-7pm Apr-Sep, 10.15am-5.15pm Oct-Mar) in St-Rémy de Provence, 25km northeast of Arles over the Alpilles. During his one year, one week, and one day's confinement he painted 150-odd canvases, including masterpieces like *Starry Night* (not to be confused with *Starry Night over the Rhône*, painted in Arles).

In February 1890 his 1888 Arles-painted work *The Red Vines* was bought by Anne Boch, sister of his friend Eugene Boch, for 400 francs (around €50 today) – the only painting he sold in his lifetime. It now hangs in the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts.

On 16 May 1890 Van Gogh moved to Auvers-sur-Oise, just outside Paris, to be closer to Theo. But on 27 July that year he shot himself, possibly to avoid further financial burden for his brother. He died two days later with Theo at his side. Theo subsequently had a breakdown, was committed and died, aged 33, just six months after Vincent. Less than a decade later, Van Gogh's talent started to achieve recognition, with major museums acquiring his work.

art includes stunning mosaics. The museum is also a leading mosaic restoration centre; watch the work in progress.

**Musée Réattu** MUSEUM, GALLERY  
(10 rue du Grand Priuré; adult/child €7/5; ☀10am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Tue-Sun) Housed in a former 15th-century priory, this splendid museum has two Picasso paintings, and 57 sketches from the early 1970s. It also contains works by 18th- and 19th-century Provençal artists, but it's best known for its cutting-edge photographic displays.

## Tours

In addition to the Van Gogh Trail, other self-guided walks with a brochure (Roman, medieval, Renaissance and classical) are marked along Arles' footpaths.

From July to September the tourist office runs guided tours (€6), with the Vieil Arles tour in English on Saturday at 5pm, and the Van Gogh tour on Tuesday at 5pm.



## Festivals & Events

**Feria Pascale** BULLFIGHTING  
Around Easter, Arles heralds the beginning of the bullfighting season.

**Fête des Gardians** CAMARGUE CULTURE  
May 1 brings the crowning of the Queen of Arles, Camargue cowboys parading through the streets, and Camargue games in the amphitheatre.

**Fêtes d'Arles** PERFORMING ARTS  
For two weeks starting around the end of June, enjoy dance, theatre, music and poetry.

**Les Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie** PHOTOGRAPHY  
(International Photography Festival; [www.rencontres-arles.com](http://www.rencontres-arles.com)) In early July, photographers from around the world display works until September.



## Sleeping

Except during festivals, bullfights and July and August, Arles has plenty of reasonably



priced accommodation. Most hotels shut during January, or the entire low season; check ahead. **Gîtes ruraux** (☎04 90 59 49 40) dot the surrounding countryside; ask the tourist office for a list.



### L'Hôtel Particulier

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎04 90 52 51 40; www.hotel-particulier.com; 4 rue de la Monnaie; d €239-259; ☎@☎) A hidden spot, this exclusive boutique hotel with restaurant, spa and *hammam* oozes chic charm. From the big black door with heavy knocker to the crisp white linens and minimalist decor, everything about this 18th-century private mansion enchants. Find it two blocks west of Espace Van Gogh.

### Hôtel de l'Amphithéâtre

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎04 90 96 10 30; www.hotelamphitheatre.fr; 5-7 rue Diderot; d €55-95; ☎@☎) Crimson, chocolate, terracotta and other rich earthy colours dress the 17th-century stone bones of this stylish hotel, with narrow staircases, roaring fire and alfresco breakfasts in a courtyard. The romantic suite (€155), with dreamy lilac-walled terrace overlooks roof-tops. Wheelchair access.

### Hôtel Arlatan

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎04 90 93 56 66; www.hotel-arlatan.fr; 26 rue du Sauvage; d €85-155; ☎@☎) The heated swimming pool, pretty garden and plush rooms decorated with antique furniture are just some of the things going for this hotel. Add to that a setting steeped in history, with Roman foundations visible through a glass floor in the lobby and 15th-century paintings on one of the lounges' ceilings. Wheelchair access.

### Grand Hôtel Nord Pinus

LUXURY HOTEL €€€

(☎04 90 93 44 44; www.nord-pinus.com; place du Forum; d €170-310; ☎) Drawing on the town's Roma and Spanish heritage, this intimate hotel is lined with vintage *feria* posters and antiques. Stunning room 10 is a favourite for many famous matadors. Amazing B&W Peter Beard photographs adorn the downstairs.

### Hôtel du Musée

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €

(☎04 90 93 88 88; www.hoteldumusee.com; 11 rue du Grand Prieuré; d €60-70, tr/q €80/95; ☎@☎) In a fine 17th- to 18th-century building, this impeccable hotel has 28 comfortable rooms, a checkerboard-tiled breakfast room and a sugar-sweet patio garden brimming with pretty blossoms.

### Le Bélvédère Hôtel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎04 90 91 45 94; www.hotelbelvedere-arles.fr; 5 place Voltaire; d €70-90; ☎@☎) This sleek 17-room hotel is one of the best Arlésian pads. A red-glass chandelier adorns the lobby-lounge and the rooms are fitted out in stylish red, chocolate brown, grey and beige colour schemes.

### Hôtel Calendal

HOTEL €€

(☎04 90 96 11 89; www.lecalendal.com; 5 rue Porte de Laure; d €109-159; ☎@☎) Next to the amphitheatre and overlooking the Théâtre Antique, rooms have beamed ceilings and bright Provençal fabrics. There's a peaceful garden terrace with a giant chessboard, and a spa. Wheelchair access.

### Auberge de Jeunesse

HOSTEL €

(☎04 90 96 18 25; www.fuaj.org, in French; 20 av Maréchal Foch; dm incl breakfast & sheets €17; ☎reception closed 10am-5pm; ☎) This

## A BULLISH AFFAIR

Animal lovers fear not: not all types of bullfights end with blood. The local Camargue variation, the *course Camarguaise*, sees amateur *razeteurs* (from the word 'shave'), wearing skin-tight white shirts and trousers, get as close as they dare to the *taureau* (bull) to try to snatch rosettes and ribbons tied to the bull's horns, using a *crochet* (a razor-sharp comb) held between their fingers – leaping over the arena's barrier as the bull charges, making spectators' hearts lurch.

Bulls are bred on a *manade* (bull farm) by *manadiers*, who are helped in their daily chores by *gardians* (Camargue cattle-herding cowboys). These mounted herdsman parade through town during the Fête des Gardians in Arles in May.

Many *manades* also breed the creamy white *cheval de Camargue* (Camargue horse) and some welcome visitors; ask at tourist offices in Arles and Stes-Maries de la Mer.

A calendar of *courses Camarguaises* is online at the **Fédération Française de la Course Camarguaise** (French Federation of Camargue Bullfights; ☎04 66 26 05 35; www.ffcc.info, in French). *Recortadores* (a type of bull-baiting with lots of bull-jumping) also happens during the bullfighting season (Easter to September).



sunlit place, made up of eight-bed dorms, is just 10 minutes' walk from the centre. Its bar closes at 11pm, just like its gates (except during *ferias*).

### Camping City

CAMPGROUND €

(☎04 90 93 08 86; www.camping-city.com; 67 rte de Crau; sites €18; ☺Apr-Sep; 📅) This campground is the closest to town, 1.5km southeast on the road to Marseille, and has bike hire and laundry. Supermarkets nearby. Take Bus 2 to the Hermite stop.



### Eating

The Roman place du Forum, shaded by outstretched plane trees, turns into a giant dining table during summer and it's home to **Café la Nuit**, thought to be captured by Van Gogh in his *Café Terrace at Night* (1888); now mostly a tourist trap.

### L'Atelier

GASTRONOMIC €€€

(☎04 90 91 07 69; www.rabanel.com; 7 rue des Carmes; lunch/dinner menus from €45/85; ☺lunch & dinner Wed-Sun) A beautiful and modern gastronomic experience. Opt for a series of seven or 13 edible works of art, then sit back and revel in Jean-Luc Rabanel's superbly crafted symphony of fresh organic tastes. No wonder this green-fingered urban chef with his own veggie patch has two Michelin stars.

### Le Cilantro

PROVENÇAL €€

(☎04 90 18 25 05; www.restaurantcilantro.com, in French; 31 rue Porte de Laure; mains €35; ☺lunch Tue-Fri, dinner Tue-Sat) Chef Jérôme Laurant, a born-and-bred local lad, runs this hot spot and combines local ingredients with world spices to create accomplished dishes like lamb in almond oil.

### La Mule Blanche

BISTRO €€

(☎04 90 93 98 54; www.restaurant-mule-blanche.com, in French; 8 rue du Président Wilson; mains €12-20; ☺lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Wed-Sun, closed Sun winter) Jazz piano tinkles in the White Mule's domed interior, but the hottest tables at this soulful bistro are aboard the pavement terrace, easily the town's prettiest with its violet awning, Saturday-morning market view and lazy mood.

### Comptoir du Sud

CAFÉ €

(☎04 90 96 22 17; 2 rue Jean Jaurès) Wonderful gourmet sandwiches (tasty chutneys, succulent meat, foie gras) and divine little salads, all at rock-bottom prices, served at a counter.



### La Chassagnette

GASTRONOMIC €€€

(☎04 90 97 26 96; http://lachassagnette-uk.blogspot.com; rte du Sambuc, Le Sambuc; lunch/dinner menus €34/54; ☺lunch & dinner Thu-Mon) Ultimate Camargue dine: Alain Ducasse prodigy Armand Arnal cooks up 100% organics 12km southeast of Arles on the D36.

### Corazón

ECLECTIC EUROPEAN €€

(☎04 90 96 32 53; 1bis rue Réattu; mains €18-25; ☺lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Combines a contemporary art gallery with a modern restaurant serving imaginative fare: rabbit ravioli with pumpkin sauce.

### Au Jardin du Calendal

TRADITIONAL FRENCH €€

(☎04 90 96 11 89; 5 rue Porte de Laure; mains €15; ☺noon-7pm Tue-Sun; 📅) Gourmet salads or tea and cake in the leafy courtyard garden.

### Self-Catering

#### Food Markets

MARKETS €

(bd Georges Clemenceau & bd des Lices; ☺Sat) Stretches the length of the main boulevard selling strong cheese, Camargue salt, olive oil and bull sausages. On Wednesday, market stalls set up along bd Émile Combes (east of Les Arènes).

#### Monoprix

SUPERMARKET €

(place Lamartine; ☺8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) Near the northern end of bd Émile Combes.



### Drinking

#### Oli Pan

CAFÉ

(☎04 90 96 11 89; 5 rue Porte de Laure; dishes €3-10; ☺9am-7pm; 📅) Le Calendal's crowd-pleaser serves organic sandwiches and Mövenpick ice creams on a sunset-facing terrace.

#### L'Australian Café Walla Beer

BAR

(☎04 90 97 22 17; 7 rue Molière) Arles is pretty quiet at night outside of *ferias*, but this place is popular for an evening drink on the terrace overlooking bd Georges Clemenceau.

#### Paddy Mullins

BAR, MUSI

(☎04 90 49 67 25; 5 bd Georges Clemenceau; ☺10am-2am) Irish-style pub featuring regular live music.



### Shopping

Next door to the first-ever boutique of home-grown fashion designer **Christian Lacroix** (52 rue de la République) is **Puyricard**



(54 rue de la République), purveying exquisite Provençal chocolates.

## **i** Information

**Cyber Saladelle** (☎04 90 93 13 56; www.cyber-saladelle.com; 17 rue de la République; per hr €3.50; ☉10am-7pm Tue-Sat) Internet access.

**Post office** (5 bd des Lices)

**Tourist office** main office (☎04 90 18 41 20; www.tourisme.ville-arles.fr; esplanade Charles de Gaulle; ☉9am-6.45pm Apr-Sep, 9am-4.45pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.45pm Sun Oct-Mar); train station (☎04 90 43 33 57; ☉9am-1.30pm & 2.30-4.45pm Mon-Fri Apr-Sep)

## **i** Getting There & Away

**AIR Nîmes Airport** (p711), 20km northwest of Arles, via the A54. No public transport between the airport and Arles.

**BUS Telleschi** (☎04 42 28 40 22) runs services to/from the following:

**Aix-en-Provence** €9, 1½ hours

**Les Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer** €2.50, one hour

**Nîmes** €1.50, 1 hour

**TRAIN** Trains go to the following:

**Avignon** €7, 20 minutes

**Marseille** €13, 55 minutes

**Nîmes** €7.50, 30 minutes

## **i** Getting Around

**BUS Star** (☎08 10 00 08 16; information office 24 bd Georges Clemenceau; ☉8.30am-noon & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri) operates local buses from 6.30am to 7.30pm Monday to Saturday, and 9.30am to 5.30pm Sunday. The office is the main hub, although most buses also stop at place Lamartine, just south of the train station. Tickets cost €0.80. Free minibuses called Starlets circle most of the old city every 20 to 25 minutes from 7.10am to 7.15pm Monday to Saturday.

**TAXI** Call ☎04 90 96 90 03.

## The Camargue

Just south of Arles, Provence's rolling landscapes yield to the flat, marshy wilds of the Camargue, famous for its teeming birdlife, roughly 500 species. King of all is the pink flamingo, which enjoys the expansive wetlands' mild winters. Equally famous are the Camargue's small white horses; their mellow disposition makes horse riding the ideal way to explore the region's patchwork of salt pans and rice

fields, and meadows dotted with grazing bulls. Bring binoculars – and mosquito repellent.

Enclosed by the Petit Rhône and Grand Rhône Rivers, most of the Camargue wetlands fall within the 850-sq-km Parc Naturel Régional de Camargue, established in 1970 to preserve the area's fragile ecosystems while sustaining local agriculture. On the periphery, the Étang de Vaccarès and nearby peninsulas and islands form the Réserve Nationale de Camargue, a 135-sq-km nature reserve.

The Camargue's two largest towns are the seaside pilgrim's outpost Les Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer and, to the northwest, the walled town of Aigues Mortes.

## Sights

### Musée Camarguais

MUSEUM

(☎04 90 97 10 82; Mas du Pont de Rousty; adult/child €4.50/free; ☉9am-6pm Wed-Mon) Inside an 1812-built sheep shed, the Camargue Museum gives a fantastic introduction to this unique area, covering history and ecosystems, as well as the traditional lifestyle of the *gardian*, Camargue's cowboys. A 3.5km nature trail leads to an observation tower with bird's-eye views. Find it 10km southwest of Arles on the D570 to Les Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer.

### Le Parc Ornithologique du Pont de Gau

NATURE RESERVE

(☎04 90 97 82 62; adult/child €7/4; ☉9am-sunset) Get up close and personal with some 2000 pink flamingos at this wonderful semiwild nature reserve 4km north of Les Stes-Maries on the D570. Dozens more bird species live on the reserve; watch them from 7km of beautiful trails meandering the site.

## Activities

### WALKING

Walking paths and trails wend through the Parc Naturel Régional and the Réserve Nationale, on the embankments and along the coast. Bookshops sell detailed walking maps (*IGN Série Bleue 2943ET* and *2944OT*) and tourist offices have good free maps.

### BOATING & WATER SPORTS

The marshy Camargue lends itself to exploration by boat. All charge around €10/5 per adult/child per 1½-hour trip. Find **Camargue Bateau de Promenade** (☎04 90



## DID YOU KNOW?

The Camargue's animals change colours. Pink flamingos turn white in winter because of the lack of carotene-rich brine shrimp. And the famous white horses are born brown, turning white only at maturity.

97 84 72; <http://bateau-camargue.com>; 5 rue des Launes) and **Quatre Maries** (☎04 90 97 70 10; [www.bateaux-4maries.camargue.fr](http://www.bateaux-4maries.camargue.fr); 36 av Théodore Aubanel) in Les Stes-Maries. **Le Tiki III** (☎04 90 97 81 68; [www.tiki3.fr](http://www.tiki3.fr)) is a beat-up old paddle boat at the mouth of the Petit Rhône 1.5km west of Les Stes-Maries.

For canoeing and kayaking on the Petit Rhône, contact **Kayak Vert Camargue** (☎04 66 73 57 17; [www.kayakvert-camargue.fr](http://www.kayakvert-camargue.fr); Mas de Sylvéréal), 14km north of Les Stes-Maries off the D38.

### HORSE RIDING

Farms along rte d'Arles (D570) offer *promenades à cheval* (horse riding) astride white Camargue horses, but some are tacky. **Les Cabanes de Cacharel** (☎04 90 97 84 10, 06 11 57 74 75; [www.cabanesdecacharel.com](http://www.cabanesdecacharel.com), in French; rte de Cacharel/D85A) charges the same as other stables (€15/26/38 per one-/two-/three-hour trek in the marshes) and offers horse-and-carriage rides.

For kids' pony rides, head to ranch theme-park **Domaine Paul Ricard** (☎04 90 97 10 62; [www.mejanes.camargue.fr](http://www.mejanes.camargue.fr); ☼year-round, by reservation mid-Oct–Easter), on the northwestern bank of Étang de Vaccarès, in Méjanès. Drive 14km south along D570 from Arles, turn left along eastbound D37, then right toward Méjanès.

### i Information

**Réserve Nationale de Camargue Office** (☎04 90 97 00 97; [www.reserve-camargue.org](http://www.reserve-camargue.org); La Capelière; ☼9am–6pm, closed Tue Oct–Mar) Along the D36B, on the eastern side of Étang de Vaccarès, with exhibits on the Camargue's ecosystems. Many trails and paths originate here.

### i Getting There & Away

Two buses daily in July and August go from Les Stes-Maries to Montpellier (€10.50, two hours) via Aigues Mortes.

### i Getting Around

Bicycles are ideal on the Camargue's flat (if windy) terrain. East of Les Stes-Maries, the

seafront and inland areas are reserved for walkers and cyclists.

**Le Vélo Saintois** (19 rue de la République, Les Stes-Maries) English-language list of cycling routes. Rents mountain bikes (€15/34 per day/three days).

**Le Vélociste** (☎04 90 97 83 26; place Mireille, Les Stes-Maries) Rents bikes, organises cycling-horseback (€36) or cycling-canoeing (€30) packages.

## LES STES-MARIES DE LA MER

POP 2500

You could be forgiven for thinking you'd crossed into Spain at this remote seaside outpost where whitewashed buildings line dusty streets and dancers in bright dresses spin flamenco. During its Roma pilgrimages, street-cooked pans of paella fuel chaotic crowds of carnivalesque guitarists, dancers and mounted cowboys.

Away from the small village, 30km of uninterrupted sandy beach bask in hot mid-day sun and narrow roads beg to be biked: the northbound D85A and the D38 are particularly scenic cycling routes.

### 📺 Sights

Tickets for **bullfights** at Les Stes-Maries' Arènes are sold at the arena. The 30km of uninterrupted fine-sand **beaches** include the area around the lighthouse **Phare de la Gacholle** (for bathing without a suit), 11km east of town.

### Église des Stes-Maries

HISTORIC CHURCH

(place de l'Église) During their pilgrimages, legions of Roma pour into this 12th- to 15th-century church to venerate the statue of black Sara, their highly revered patron saint. The relics of Sara along with those of Marie-Salomé and Sainte Marie-Jacobé, all found in the crypt by King René in 1448, are enshrined in a painted wooden chest, stashed in the stone wall above the choir. From the church's **rooftop terrace** (adult/child €2/1.50; ☼10am–12.30pm & 2–6.30pm Mon–Fri, 10am–7pm Sat & Sun, only Wed, Sat & Sun Nov–Feb), a great panorama unfolds.

### 🛏 Sleeping

Low-rise hotels line the D570 heading into Les Stes-Maries. Old farmhouses surrounding town often let rooms.



**L'Auberge Cavalière**

HISTORIC FARMHOUSE €€

(☎04 90 97 88 88; [www.aubergecavaliere.com](http://www.aubergecavaliere.com); D570; d €140–195; 🍷🍷🍷) Approximately



## THE STORY OF THE MARYS & GITAN PILGRIMAGES

Catholicism first reached European shores in what's now tiny Les Stes-Maries. So the stories go, Stes Marie-Salomé and Marie-Jacobé (and some say Mary Magdalene) fled the Holy Land in a little boat and were caught in a storm, drifting at sea until washing ashore here.

Provençal and Catholic lore diverge at this point: Catholicism relates that Sara, patron saint of the *gitans* (Roma Gitano people, also known as gypsies), travelled with the two Marys on the boat; Provençal legend says Sara was already here and was the first person to recognise their holiness. In 1448, skeletal remains said to belong to Sara and the two Marys were found in a crypt in Les Stes-Maries.

*Gitans* continue to make pilgrimages (*Pèlerinage des Gitans*) here on 24 and 25 May (often staying for up to three weeks), dancing and playing music in the streets, and parading a statue of Sara through town. The Sunday in October closest to the 22nd sees a second pilgrimage dedicated to the two Stes Maries; *courses Camarguaises* (nonlethal bullfights) are also held at this time.

1.5km north of Les Stes-Maries, this salt-of-the-earth hotel spreads out over a typical Camargue landscape of wetlands and meadows. Rooms 340 to 345 look over a pond teeming with birdlife; the thatched cabins offer cosy independent quarters. Horse-riding trips and great regional **restaurant** (menus €18-42).

### Hôtel Méditerranée

HOTEL €

(☎04 90 97 82 09; www.mediterraneehotel.com, in French; 4 av Frédéric Mistral; d €46-60; ☼) Handily located in the centre of town, one of the cheapest and most charming options. Simple rooms seconds from the sea.

### Le Mas de Peint

HISTORIC FARMHOUSE €€€

(☎04 90 97 20 62; www.masdepeint.com; Le Sambuc; d/ste from €235/375; ☼mid-Mar-mid-Nov & mid-Dec-mid-Jan; ☼☼) Camargue's most upmarket *mas* (farmhouse): think chic, gentrified country quarters right out of the pages of design mag *Côte Sud*. Horses and bikes to ride, and a tasty **restaurant** to boot.

### Camping La Brise

CAMPGROUND €

(☎04 90 97 84 67; fax 04 90 97 72 01; av Marcel Carrière; per site €19-22; ☼closed mid-Nov-mid-Dec; ☼) Right on the beach, with two swimming pools. Good option for families. Can be very windy; pick somewhere sheltered.

### Auberge de Jeunesse

HOSTEL €

(☎04 90 97 51 72; www.auberge-de-jeunesse.camargue.fr, in French; Pioch Badet; dm incl breakfast, dinner & sheets €30; ☼reception 7.30-10.30am & 5-11pm Sep-Jun) Half board is part of the package at this rural hotel, 8km north of Les Stes-Maries on the

D570 to Arles. Buses from Arles drop you at the door.



### Eating



### La Cabane aux Coquillages

SEAFOOD €

(rue Théodore Aubanel) As the day's blazing heat fades, join the crowds at this pocket-sized fish shop on the seafront with crates of crustaceans piled high inside and a gaggle of sea-blue chairs outside. Buy shellfish to savour at home, relax on the packed pavement terrace with a seafood platter or indulge in a glass of dry white and half-a-dozen oysters (€6).



### Information

**Tourist office** (☎04 90 97 82 55; www.saintesmaries.com; 5 av Van Gogh; ☼9am-7pm) Excellent website, information on activities including maps for walking and cycling, and guided walking tours (€7).

## AIGUES-MORTES

POP 7705

Actually located over the border from Provence in the Gard *département*, the town of Aigues-Mortes is 28km northwest of Les Stes-Maries at the western extremity of the Camargue. Aigues-Mortes is set in flat marshland and encircled by walls. The town was established in the mid-13th century by Louis IX to give the French crown a Mediterranean port under its direct control, and in 1248 Louis IX's flotilla of 1500 ships massed here before setting sail to the Holy Land for the Seventh Crusade.

The cobbled streets inside the city walls are lined with restaurants, cafés and bars, giving it a festive atmosphere. It's definitely



a charming option from which to explore the area.

### **Sights & Activities**

Scaling the ramparts rewards you with sweeping views. Head to the top of the tower, **Tour de Constance** (adult/child €6.50/free; ☀10am-7pm). The 1.6km wall-top walk takes about one hour.

The southern ramparts afford views of the stretching salt-pans (the Salins du Midi), which you can travel through aboard the **salt train** (☎04 66 73 40 24; www.salins.fr; adult/child €8/6; ☀Mar-Oct), accompanied by commentary in English. Book tickets at the office at Porte de la Gardette, from where you will catch a bus to the salt-pan site.

### **Sleeping & Eating**

Parking within the town walls is practically impossible but there are plenty of car parks outside.



### **L'Hermitage de St-Antoine** B&B €€

(☎06 03 04 34 05; www.hermitagesa.com; 9 bd Intérieur Nord; r €79; ☀) Inside the walled town, this pocket-sized *chambre d'hôte* has three exquisitely appointed rooms, one with a small private terrace, and all with fresh, crisp decor. The continental breakfast takes on new dimensions in the sun-filled patio. Only children aged over 12.

### **Hôtel L'Escale**

HOTEL €

(☎04 66 53 71 14; http://hotel.escala.free.fr; 3 av Tour de Constance; r €32-40, 4-5-person r €65-75; 🍴) L'Escale caters fantastically to budget travellers. Basic rooms are immaculate, as are the shared bathrooms and toilets of the cheaper rooms. Bigger rooms in the annexe are good value for families. The **restaurant** (mains €7 to €10) has a flower-lined terrace.

### **Le Café de Bouzigues**

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎04 66 53 93 95; 7 rue Pasteur; menus €30) (☎) The modern find is trendy, fun and unconventional. Both the interior and the seasonally changing food have slightly wacky tendencies (hot and cold oysters with figs and an onion and ginger puree), but both ways it is a resounding success.

### **Information**

**Tourist office** (☎04 66 53 73 00; www.ot-aiguesmortes.fr; place St-Louis; ☀9am-noon & 1-6pm) Inside the walled city.

## THE VAUCLUSE

The Vaucluse is like every Provençal cliché rolled into one: lavender fields, scenic hills, rows upon rows of vineyards, enchanting villages and picturesque markets, traditional stone houses, beating summer sun and howling winter mistral. At the heart of Vaucluse, which means 'closed valley', is the exquisite town of Avignon.

A car is the ideal way to cover the Vaucluse, but it's possible (if not expedient) to get around by bus.

## Avignon

POP 93,566

Hooded by 4.3km of superbly preserved stone ramparts, this graceful city is the belle of Provence's ball. Its turn as the papal seat of power has bestowed Avignon with a treasury of magnificent art and architecture, none grander than the massive medieval fortress and papal palace, the Palais des Papes.

Famed for its annual performing arts festival, these days Avignon is also an animated student city and an ideal spot from which to step out into the surrounding region. Avignon is also known for its fabled bridge, the Pont St-Bénézet, aka the Pont d'Avignon.

### **History**

Avignon first gained its ramparts and its reputation as a city of art and culture during the 14th century, when Pope Clement V and his court fled political turmoil in Rome for Avignon. From 1309 to 1377 the seven French-born popes invested huge sums of money in building and decorating the papal palace. Under the popes' rule, Jews and political dissidents took shelter here. Pope



### **PASSION PASS**

The nifty **Avignon Passion Pass** entitles you to discounts on museum visits, trips and tours in Avignon and Villeneuve-lès-Avignon. The first place you use the pass costs the full amount, but after that there's a 10% to 50% reduction. It's valid for 15 days, and covers a family of five. Pick up your pass from the tourist office, or any of the tourist sites.

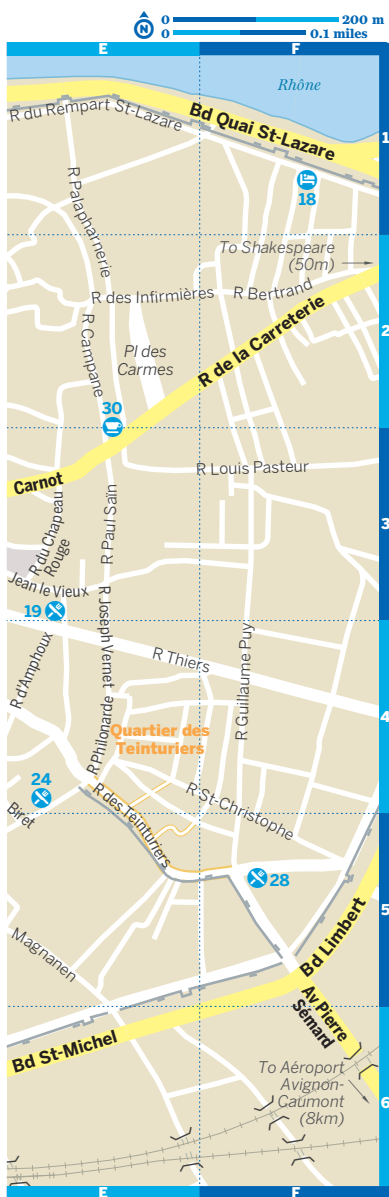




Gregory XI left Avignon in 1376, but his death two years later led to the Great Schism (1378–1417), during which rival popes (up to three at one time) resided at Rome and Avignon, denouncing and excommunicating one another. Even after the schism was set-

tled and an impartial pope, Martin V, established himself in Rome, Avignon remained under papal rule. The city and Comtat Venaissin (now the Vaucluse *département*) were ruled by papal legates until 1791, when they were annexed to France.





## Sights & Activities

Wrapping around the city, Avignon's **ramparts**, built between 1359 and 1370, were restored during the 19th century, minus their original moats. One of the city's chief joys is to wander aimlessly, peeking into

its hidden corners. Ticket offices for most sights close up to one hour before overall closing times.

### Palais des Papes

HISTORIC PALACE

(Palace of the Popes; ☎04 90 27 50 00; [www.palais-des-papes.com](http://www.palais-des-papes.com); place du Palais; adult/child incl audioguide €6/3; ☀9am-7pm) This Unesco World Heritage Site, the world's largest Gothic palace, was built when Pope Clement V abandoned Rome in 1309 and settled in Avignon. The immense scale of the palace, with its cavernous stone halls and vast courtyards, testifies to the wealth of the popes; the 3m-thick walls, portcullises and watchtowers emphasise their need for defence.

Today it takes some imagination to picture the former luxury of these vast bare rooms. You can catch whispering glimpses in the wonderful 14th-century **chapel frescos** painted by Matteo Giovannetti; in the dark-blue walls of the **Pope's apartment**, threaded with dusky red flowers; and in the superb **Chambre du Cerf**, alive with medieval hunting scenes. Visit at lunchtime to avoid group tours.

### Place du Palais

LANDMARK SQUARE

A golden statue of the Virgin Mary (weighing a portly 4.5 tons) stands on the dome of the Romanesque **Cathédrale Notre Dame des Doms** (built 1671-72), outstretched arms protecting the city. Admire fine views from **Rocher des Doms gardens**. Opposite the palace, the building dripping with out-sized carvings of fruit and heraldic beasts is the former 17th-century mint, **Hôtel des Monnaies**.

### Pont St-Bénézet

LANDMARK BRIDGE

(St Bénézet's Bridge; adult/child €4.50/3.50; ☀9am-8pm, 9.30am-5.45pm Nov-Mar) According to legend, pastor Bénézet had three saintly visions urging him to build a bridge across the Rhône. Known to countless kids as the Pont d'Avignon from the chirpy French rhyme, it was completed in 1185 and linked Avignon with Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, controlling trade at this vital crossroads. It was rebuilt several times before all but four of its spans were washed away in the mid-1600s. If you don't feel like paying to visit the bridge, you can see it for free from the Rocher des Doms park, Pont Édouard Daladier or from across the river on the Île de la Barthelasse's chemin des Berges.



## Avignon

### 📍 Top Sights

Musée Angladon .....	C4
Musée du Petit Palais .....	C1
Palais des Papes .....	C2
Place du Palais .....	C2
Pont St-Bénézet .....	C1

### 📍 Sights

1 Bureau du Festival .....	C5
2 Cathédrale Notre Dame des Doms .....	C1
3 Hôtel des Monnaies .....	C2
4 Musée Calvet .....	B4
5 Pont St-Bénézet Entrance .....	C1

### Activities, Courses & Tours

6 Autocars Lieutaud .....	C6
7 Les Grands Bateaux de Provence .....	A3
8 Shuttle Boat Embarkment Point .....	C1

### 🛏 Sleeping

9 Hôtel Boquier .....	C5
10 Hôtel de Garlande .....	C4
11 Hôtel de l'Horloge .....	C3
12 Hôtel d'Europe .....	B2
13 Hôtel du Palais des Papes .....	C2
14 Hôtel La Mirande .....	C2
15 Hôtel Mignon .....	B3
16 Hôtel Splendid .....	C5
17 Le Limas .....	B2
18 Lumani .....	F1

### 🍴 Eating

19 Au Tout Petit .....	E3
20 Christian Etienne .....	C3
21 Cuisine du Dimanche .....	D3
22 Ginette et Marcel .....	D5
Le Marmiton .....	(see 14)
23 La Tropézienne .....	B3
24 L'Épice and Love .....	E4
25 Les 5 Sens .....	B3
26 Les Halles .....	D4
27 Monoprix .....	C4
28 Numéro 75 .....	F5
29 Terre de Saveurs .....	D5

### 🍷 Drinking

Le Cid Café .....	(see 11)
30 Mon Bar .....	E2
31 Red Sky .....	D3
32 Tapalocas .....	C4
33 Utopia Bar .....	D2

### 🎬 Entertainment

AJMI .....	(see 33)
Cinéma Utopia .....	(see 33)
34 Fnac .....	C4
35 L'Esclave .....	B2
36 Opéra Théâtre d'Avignon .....	C3
37 Red Zone .....	D3

### 🛍 Shopping

38 Comtesse du Barry .....	B3
39 Oliviers & Co .....	B3

### Musée Angladon

ART MUSEUM

(☎04 90 82 29 03; www.angladon.com; 5 rue Laboureur; adult/child €6/4; 🕒1-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Nov, 1-6pm Wed-Sun Jan-Mar, closed Dec) Born out of the private collection of couturier Jacques Doucet (1853-1929), this charming museum harbours Impressionist treasures, including the only Van Gogh painting in Provence (*Railway Wagons*), and works by Cézanne, Manet, Degas and Picasso. Upstairs is a collection of antique furniture and 16th- and 17th-century paintings.

### Musée du Petit Palais

RELIGIOUS ART MUSEUM

(☎04 90 86 44 58; www.petit-palais.org; place du Palais; adult/child €6/free; 🕒10am-1pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon) The bishops' and archbishops' palace during the 14th and 15th centuries is now home to an outstanding collection of lavish 13th- to 16th-century Italian religious paintings created by artists including Botticelli, Carpaccio and Giovanni di Paolo.

### Musée Calvet

FINE ART MUSEUM

(☎04 90 86 33 84; 65 rue Joseph Vernet; adult/child €6/3; 🕒10am-1pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon) Impressive architecture and art intertwine at the elegant Hôtel de Villeneuve-Martignan (built 1741-54), home of Musée Calvet. Collections include 15th-century wrought-iron works and paintings from the 16th to 20th centuries.

### 🆓 Shuttle Boat

SHUTTLE BOAT

(☎10am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm, 11am-9pm Jul & Aug, only Sat & Sun Oct-Dec & mid-Feb-Mar) Adjacent to Pont St-Bénézet; connects the walled city with the Île de la Barthelasse.

### 👉 Tours

The tourist office has a map in English which has four **walking tours** around the old town.



## Les Grands Bateaux de Provence

BOAT TOUR

(☎04 90 85 62 25; [www.mireio.net](http://www.mireio.net), in French; al-lées de l'Oulle) April to September loop under the bridge and to Villeneuve-lès-Avignon (€8). Year-round travel the Rhône to Arles or the vineyard area of Châteauneuf-du-Pape on a restaurant-boat (€48, including a meal).

### Guided Tours

WALKING TOURS

(adult/child €17/7; ☉10am daily, Sat only Nov-Mar) Two-hour tours of Avignon in English and French depart from the tourist office.

### Autocars Lieutaud

BUS TOURS

(☎04 90 86 36 75; 36 bd Saint-Roch; [www.cars-lieutaud.fr](http://www.cars-lieutaud.fr)) Half- and full-day tours visit nearby vineyards, the Pont du Gars or the Luberon (€45). For a vintage experience, do it in the archetypal Citroën 2CV (€145 for a three-hour chauffeured trip in the Alpilles).



## Festivals & Events

### Festival d'Avignon

PERFORMING ARTS

(☎04 90 27 66 50; [www.festival-avignon.com](http://www.festival-avignon.com); Espace St-Louis, 20 rue du Portail Boquier; tickets €16-50) Hundreds of artists take to the stage and streets during this world-famous festival, founded in 1946 and held every year from early July to early August.

### Festival Off

PERFORMING ARTS

(☎04 90 85 13 08; [www.avignonleoff.com](http://www.avignonleoff.com), in French; 5 rue Ninon Vallin) Paralleling the official Avignon festival, this fringe event has an eclectic, cheaper program of experimental performances. La Carte Off (€13) discount card gets 30% off all performances.



## Sleeping

Avignon is one of the few places in Provence that caters well for budget-conscious travelers. Book many months ahead for a room during the festival, when prices soar.



### Hôtel La Mirande

LUXURY HOTEL €€€

(☎04 90 14 20 20; [www.la-mirande.fr](http://www.la-mirande.fr); 4 place de la Mirande; d €390-540; ☎☎☎) Avignon's top hotel (by far) occupies a converted 16th-century cardinal's palace with dramatic high-ceilinged spaces decked out in oriental rugs, gold-threaded tapestries, marble staircases and dizzying over-the-top Gallic style. Low-end rooms are smallish, but still conjure the feeling of being a guest in someone's private château. The on-

site formal restaurant, **Le Marmiton** (mains from €35), offers cooking classes (from €80) and a twice-weekly chef's table (€92, reservations essential); afternoon tea is served (albeit slowly) in the glittering lobby.

### Le Limas

B&amp;B €€

(☎04 90 14 67 19; [www.le-limas-avignon.com](http://www.le-limas-avignon.com); 51 rue du Limas; d/tr from €120/200; ☎☎) Behind its discreet lavender door, this chic B&B in an 18th-century town house is like something out of *Vogue Living*. It's everything interior designers strive for when mixing old and new: from the state-of-the-art kitchen and minimalist white decor to antique fireplaces and 18th-century spiral staircase. Breakfast by the fireplace or on the sun-drenched terrace is a treat, as is bubbly Marion.

### Hôtel Boquier

HOTEL €

(☎04 90 82 34 43; [www.hotel-boquier.com](http://www.hotel-boquier.com), in French; 6 rue du Portail Boquier; d €50-70; ☎☎) The infectious enthusiasm of owners Sylvie and Pascal Sendra sweeps through this central little place. It's bright, airy and spacious; try for the themed rooms Morocco or Lavender.

### Lumani

B&amp;B €€

(☎04 90 82 94 11; [www.avignon-lumani.com](http://www.avignon-lumani.com); 37 rue du Rempart St-Lazare; d €100-170; ☎☎) This fabulous *maison d'hôte* run by Elisabeth, whose art is hung throughout the stunning house, is a fount of inspiration for artists. Rooms include two suites and there's a fountained garden.

### Hôtel de l'Horloge

HOTEL €€

(☎04 90 16 42 00; [www.hotels-ocre-azur.com](http://www.hotels-ocre-azur.com); place de l'Horloge; r €95-180; ☎☎) Most rooms at this supercentral hotel are straightforward (comfortable, all mod cons), but the five terrace rooms have the edge with sophisticated furnishings and views; ask for 505 with its incredible view of the Palais des Papes. Wheelchair access.

### Hôtel de Garlande

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎04 90 80 08 85; [www.hoteldegarlande.com](http://www.hoteldegarlande.com); 20 rue Galante; d €80-108; ☎☎) Central for just about everything, the sweet, cheerily coloured rooms in a historic *hôtel particulier* overlook a narrow street. Rooms are elegantly decorated, bathrooms sparkling new, but the stairway's steep.

### Hôtel du Palais des Papes

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎04 90 86 04 13; [www.hotel-avignon.com](http://www.hotel-avignon.com); 3 place du Palais; d €75-85, ste €120) This old-fashioned abode has wrought-iron



furniture, frescoed ceilings and exposed stone walls. Pricier rooms do indeed sport views of the Palais des Papes. There's also a wonderfully authentic restaurant, **Le Lutrin** (menus €25-35).

### Hôtel Mignon

HOTEL €

(02 04 90 82 17 30; [www.hotel-mignon.com](http://www.hotel-mignon.com); 12 rue Joseph Vernet; r incl breakfast €45-80; ⑤ ⑥) Cute and comfy, this 16-room place within the walled city is a favourite for its small rooms in pretty shades (and tiny bathrooms), and its friendly staff.



### Hôtel Splendid

HOTEL €

(02 04 90 86 14 46; [www.avignon-splendid-hotel.com](http://www.avignon-splendid-hotel.com); 17 rue Agricole Perdiguer; s €40, d €57-70, apt €75-95; ⑤) This cyclist-friendly place has charming rooms, half of them overlooking the pretty neighbouring park. Ground-floor flat has its own patio. Environmentally minded owners use only natural cleaning products.

### Hôtel d'Europe

LUXURY HOTEL €€€

(02 04 90 14 76 76; [www.heurope.com](http://www.heurope.com); 12 place Crillon; d €195-480; ⑤ ⑥) Though guests once included everyone from Napoleon to Jacqueline Kennedy-Onassis, now the famous address rests on its laurels and needs new fabrics and better lighting.

### YMCA-UCJG

HOSTEL €

(02 04 90 25 46 20; [www.ymca-avignon.com](http://www.ymca-avignon.com); 7bis chemin de la Justice; dm without/with bath-room €25/36; ⑤ reception 8.30am-6pm, closed Dec-early Jan; ⑤ ⑥) This spotless hostel across the river, just outside Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, has some private rooms and a swimming pool and terrace with panoramic views of the city. Sheets included. Wheelchair access. Take bus 10 to the Montau stop.

### Camping & Auberge Bagatelle

CAMPGROUND, HOSTEL €

(02 04 90 86 30 39; [www.campingbagatelle.com](http://www.campingbagatelle.com); Île de la Barthelasse; tent only per person €6, car per person €13, dm incl breakfast €18; ⑤ reception 8am-9pm) Shaded and only 20 minutes' walk from the centre on Île de la Barthelasse. Also, basic serviceable two-to eight-bed dorms; sheets are €2.50.



### Eating

Place de l'Horloge's touristy cafés only have so-so food. Restaurants open seven days during summer-festival season, when reservations become essential. *Papaline d'Avignon* is a pink chocolate ball filled with potent Mont Ventoux herbal liqueur.



### Cuisine du Dimanche

PROVINCIAL FRENCH €€

(02 04 90 82 99 10; [www.lacuisinedudimanche.com](http://www.lacuisinedudimanche.com), in French; 31 rue Bonnetterie; mains €15-25; ⑤ closed Sun & Mon Oct-May) Spitfire chef Marie shops every morning at Les Halles to find the freshest ingredients for her earthy flavour-packed cooking, and takes no culinary short cuts. The market-driven menu changes daily, but specialties include scallops and a simple roast chicken with pan gravy. The narrow stone-walled dining room is a mishmash of textures, from contemporary resin chairs to antique crystal goblets, befitting the chef's eclecticism. Make reservations.

### Les 5 Sens

GASTRONOMIC €€

(02 04 90 85 26 51; [www.restaurantles5sens.com](http://www.restaurantles5sens.com); 18 rue Joseph Vernet; lunch menus €20, lunch mains €13-17, dinner mains €22-30; ⑤ Tue-Sat) Chef Thierry Baucher, one of France's *meilleurs ouvriers* (top chefs), reveals his southwestern origins in specialties including cassoulet and foie gras, but goes contemporary-Mediterranean in his gastronomic dishes, such as butternut-squash ravioli with escargots. The dining room is refreshingly unfussy, vaguely French Colonial with rattan and carved wood, and service impeccable.

### Au Tout Petit

CONTEMPORARY FRENCH €€

(02 04 90 82 38 86; 4 rue d'Amphoux; lunch menus €11, dinner menus €16-24; ⑤ Tue-Sat) The 'Teeny Tiny' packs big flavours into every imaginative dish, such as tuna carpaccio with vanilla, or apricot *tarte Tatin* with rosemary ice cream; simple, smart cooking, maximizing the use of spice. Wines by the glass cost a mere €2.50, and lunch is a steal. Only eight tables make reservations essential.

### L'Epice and Love

HOMESTYLE FRENCH €

(02 04 90 82 45 96, 30 rue des Lices; mains €11-12; ⑤ dinner Mon-Sat) Tables are cheek by jowl at this tiny bohemian restaurant, decorated with antique kitchenware and mismatched chairs. There's nothing fancy, just straightforward bistro fare, stews, roasts and other homestyle French dishes. No credit cards.

### Numéro 75

CONTEMPORARY FRENCH €€

(02 04 90 27 16 00; 75 rue Guillaume Puy; menus €26-32; ⑤ Mon-Sat) The stately dining room of absinthe inventor Jules Pernod's former mansion is a fitting backdrop for stylized Med cooking. The menu changes nightly, and may only include three mains, but brevity guarantees freshness. On balmy nights book a table in the courtyard garden.



**Christian Etienne**

GASTRONOMIC €€€

(☎04 90 86 16 50; 10 rue de Mons; mains €28-45; ☹Tue-Sat) Avignon's top table rests on its laurels and could stand some redecorating, but the refined Provençal cuisine remains exceptional, most notably the summertime-only starter-to-dessert tomato menu. Reservations essential.

**Ginette et Marcel**

SANDWICHES €

(27 place des Corps Saints; dishes €4-6; ☹11am-midnight) Snacks or a light meal of *tartines* (open-faced sandwiches) and fruit tarts.

**Terre de Saveurs**

VEGETARIAN €€

(☎04 90 86 68 72; rue Saint Michel, off place des Corps Saints; mains €14.50; ☹lunch Tue-Sat, dinner Fri & Sat; ☹) Half the menu is all-organic vegetarian, the other half veg-heavy meat dishes.

**Self-Catering**

Take a picnic to **Rocher des Doms**, a bluff-top park with views spanning the Rhône, Pont St-Bénézet, Villeneuve-lès-Avignon and Mont Ventoux.

**Les Halles**

FOOD MARKET €

(place Pie; ☹7am-1pm Tue-Sun)

**Monoprix**

SUPERMARKET €

(24 rue de la République; ☹8am-9pm Mon-Sat)

**La Tropicienne**

PATISserie €

(22 rue St-Agricol; ☹8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat) St-Tropez's famous cream-and-cake concoction, *tarte tropézienne*, and other Avignon treats.

**Drinking****Mon Bar**

CAFÉ

(17 rue Portail-Matheron; ☹8am-8pm) This Parisian-looking bistro has been going for 70 years and looks set to go for another 70. It's a neighbourhood institution; don't expect more than a scowl if you try to order your coffee in English.

**Tapalocas**

TAPAS BAR

(15 rue Galante; tapas from €3; ☹noon-1am) In the pedestrian area, tuck into a seemingly endless array of traditional Spanish tapas over a sangria or two.

**Utopia Bar**

BAR

(4 rue des escaliers Ste-Anne; ☹noon-midnight) At the foot of the imposing Palais des Papes walls, l'Utopia has something of a thespian bent with its red velvet benches, beautiful glass verandah and great mirrors throughout. Perfect for a glass of wine.

**Le Cid Café**

MUSIC BAR

(☎04 90 82 30 28; 11 place de l'Horloge; ☹11am-late) DJs keep the beats coming at this fluoro-lit, happening joint on Place de l'Horloge. Locals love it and so do visitors keen for a piece of the action.

**Red Sky**

ENGLISH PUB

(☎04 90 85 93 23; rue St-Jean le Vieux; ☹10am-1am) Looking as though someone picked it up in central London and plonked it in Avignon, this cherry-red English pub has gigs, theme nights and plenty of sport on TV.

**Entertainment**

Avignon's nightlife revolves around live music and theatre, rather than wild bars and clubs. The free *César* weekly magazine and the tourist office's fortnightly newsletter, *Rendez-vous d'Avignon*, (both in French) carry listings. Tickets are sold at **Fnac** (☎08 25 02 00 20; 19 rue de la République; ☹10am-7pm Mon-Sat) or the tourist office.

**Opéra Théâtre d'Avignon**

PERFORMING ARTS

(☎04 90 82 81 40; www.operatheatreavignon.fr; place de l'Horloge; ☹box office 11am-6pm Tue-Sat) Housed in an imposing structure built in 1847, Opéra d'Avignon stages everything from operas to ballets, October to June.

**AJMI**

JAZZ CLUB

(Association pour Le Jazz & La Musique Improvisée; ☎04 90 86 08 61; www.jazzalajmi.com, in French; 4 rue des Escaliers Ste-Anne) This 30-year-old jazz club is inside the arts centre, La Manutention.

**Cinéma Utopia**

MOVIE THEATRE

(☎04 90 82 65 36; www.cinemas-utopia.org, in French; 4 rue des Escaliers Ste-Anne) Screens films in original languages; inside the arts centre.

**Red Zone**

NIGHTCLUB

(☎04 90 27 02 44; 25 rue Carnot) A studenty crowd gathers here for its regular gigs, boogying and always-buzzing bar.

**L'Esclave**

GAY CLUB

(☎04 90 85 14 91; www.esclavebar.com, in French; 12 rue du Limas) Avignon's inner-city gay hot spot rocks most nights starting at 11:30pm.

**Shopping****Comtesse du Barry**

GOURMET FOOD

(25 rue St-Agricol) Stock up on gourmet goodies like fine wine and foie gras.



**Oliviers & Co**

OLIVE PRODUCTS

(19 rue St-Agricol) Fine olive oil and olive oil-based products such as soap, creams and biscuits.

**Shakespeare**

BOOKS

(04 90 27 38 50; 155 rue de la Carreterie; ☹Tue-Sat) Enjoy homemade scones with your tomes at this English bookshop and *salon de thé*.

**i Information**

Note that it's hard to change money on week-ends in Avignon. Internet cafés dot place Pie.

**CIC** (13 rue de la République) Has an ATM.

**La Cabine** (04 90 14 18 20; 15 rue Florence; per 30min €1; ☹9am-midnight Mon-Sat) Internet access.

**Post office** (cours Président Kennedy) Changes currency.

**Provence Guide** (www.provenceguide.com) Vaucluse region information, including B&Bs.

**Tourist office** (www.avignon-tourisme.com; 41 cours Jean Jaurès; ☹9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9.45am-5pm Sun)

**i Getting There & Away****Air**

**Aéroport Avignon-Caumont** (04 90 81 51 51; www.avignon.aeroport.fr) Eight kilometres southeast of Avignon. Flights from Britain and Ireland, April to October.

**Bus**

The **bus station** (bd St-Roch; ☹information window 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) is in the basement of the building that's down the ramp to the right as you exit the train station. Tickets sold on board. On Sunday most lines have reduced frequency.

**Aix-en-Provence** €14, 1¼ hour

**Arles** €8, 1½ hours

**Carpentras** €2, 35 minutes

**Marseille** €20, two hours

**Nîmes** €8, 1¼ hours

**Orange** €3, 45 minutes

**Linebús** (04 90 85 30 48; www.linebus.com), with direct service to Barcelona, and **Eurolines** (04 90 85 27 60; www.eurolines.com) have offices at the far end of the platforms.

**Car & Motorcycle**

Car-hire agencies are either inside the main train station or nearby.

To reduce traffic within the walls, the city has over 900 free, monitored parking spaces at Parking de L'Île Piot and Parking des Italiens,

both served by a free shuttle bus. There's also free parking just outside the walls, along the city's southern and eastern ramps.

**Train**

Avignon has two stations: **Gare Avignon TGV**, 4km southwest in Courtine; and central **Gare Avignon Centre** (42 bd St-Roch) with service to/from:

**Arles** €6.50, 20 minutes

**Nîmes** €8.50, 30 minutes

**Orange** €5.50, 20 minutes

Some TGVs to/from Paris stop at Gare Avignon Centre, but TGVs for Marseille (€23, 35 minutes) and Nice (€54, three hours) only use Gare Avignon TGV.

In July and August there's a direct **Eurostar** (www.eurostar.com) service on Saturday from London (from €135 return, six hours) to Gare Avignon Centre. See p973 for more details.

**Left luggage** (per bag from €4; ☹7am-7pm winter, to 10pm summer) is inside the station.

**i Getting Around****To/From the Airport**

No public transport to the airport. Taxis cost around €20.

**Bicycle & Motorcycle**

**Provence Bike** (www.provence-bike.com, in French; 52 bd St-Roch) Also rents scooters and motorbikes.

**Vélopop** (08 10 45 64 56; www.velopop.fr, in French) Shared-bicycle service, with 19 stations around town. Pick up at one, return at another. The first 30 minutes are free. One day/week costs €1/3, plus a refundable deposit of €150 guaranteed to your credit card. Sign up by phone, or use the credit-card machines at stations.

**Bus**

Local **TCRA** (Transports en Commun de la Région d'Avignon; www.tcra.fr, in French) bus tickets cost €1.20 each, purchased on board. Buses run from 7am to about 7.40pm (less frequently on Sunday, from 8am to 6pm). The two most important bus transfer points are the Poste stop at the main post office and place Pie.

**Agence Commerciale TCRA** (av de Lattre de Tassigny; ☹8.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Fri) or its TGV station branch have free maps and sell *carnets* of 10 tickets (€9.50).

Villeneuve-lès-Avignon Bus 11 stops in front of the main post office and on the western side of the walled city near Porte de l'Oulle.

Navette shuttle buses link Gare Avignon TGV with the centre (€1.20, 10 to 13 minutes, half-hourly between 6.15am and 11.30pm), at the post office on cours Président Kennedy.



**Taxi**

At the train station, or call ☎04 90 82 20 20.

## Around Avignon

### VILLENEUVE-LÈS-AVIGNON

POP 13,084

Thirteenth-century Villeneuve-lès-Avignon gazes across the Rhône at Avignon like a wistful little sister. Entranced by the bigger city's charm, most visitors barely glance at Villeneuve; but frankly, it's our preferred sibling, with monuments to rival Avignon's and none of the crowds.

Just 3km from Avignon, Villeneuve is easily reached by foot or Bus 11 from Avignon's main post office. Sights are included in the Avignon Passion pass.

### Chartreuse du Val de Bénédiction

MONASTERY

(☎04 90 15 24 24; www.chartreuse.org; 58 rue de la République; adult/child €6.50/free; ☉9.30am-6.30pm) Three cloisters, 40 cells, church and chapels, washhouse, and nook-and-cranny gardens make up the biggest Carthusian monastery in France. Pope Innocent VI founded it in 1352...and was buried here 10 years later in an elaborate mausoleum.

### Musée Pierre de Luxembourg

RELIGIOUS ART

(☎04 90 27 49 66; 3 rue de la République; admission €3.10; ☉10am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm). If you're remotely interested in religious art, see Enguerrand Quarton's lavish and dramatic 1453 painting *The Crowning of the Virgin* (accompanying notes give insight into its commissioning and meaning) and the rare 14th-century *Ivory Virgin*.

### Fort St-André

FORT

(☎04 90 25 45 35; adult/child €5/free; ☉10am-1pm & 2-5.30pm). Walk a section of the majestic 14th-century ramparts, and admire the 360-degree views from the top of the **Tour des Masques** (Mask Tower) and **Tour Jumelles** (Twin Towers). Meandering pathways at one of France's top 100 gardens, **Jardins de l'Abbaye** (admission €5), cross a rose garden, duck under wisteria-covered pergolas and thread by three ancient ruined churches.

### Tour Philippe-le-Bel

MONUMENTAL TOWER

(☎04 32 70 08 57; admission €2; ☉10am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Tue-Sun, closed noon-2pm Oct, Nov & Mar). Take the spiral steps to the top of this 14th-century defensive tower; built at what was the northwestern end of

Pont St-Bénézet, for awesome views of the walled city.

## LES BAUX DE PROVENCE

POP 380

At the heart of the Alpilles and spectacularly perched above picture-perfect rolling hills of vineyards, olive groves and orchards is one of the most visited villages in France: Les Baux de Provence, 30km south of Avignon towards Arles. Les Baux was vividly immortalised by Van Gogh during his time in nearby St-Rémy de Provence (see boxed text, p781). Visit in the early evening after the caterpillar of tourist coaches has crawled back downhill.

**Château des Baux** (☎04 90 54 55 56; www.chateau-baux-provence.com; adult/child €7.50/5.50; ☉9am-6pm, to 8pm Jul & Aug) perches on a 245m-high grey limestone *baou* (Provençal for rocky spur) at the top of the village and dominates the surrounding countryside. Thought to date to the 10th century, the castle was largely destroyed in 1633 during the reign of Louis XIII. Explore its 7 hectares of mazelike ruins with the free audioguide, or just run wild through deep dungeons and up crumbling towers (from where there are out-of-this-world views). Demonstrations of medieval warfare occur in summer.

Large-scale sound-and-light projections at **Cathédrale d'Images** (www.cathedrale-images.com; adult/child €7.50/3.50) flicker against the backdrop of a former quarry cave, a few minutes' stroll north of the village. The show, which changes each year, is quite unique; wear warm clothes.

Legendary **L'Oustau de Baumanière** (☎04 90 54 33 07; www.oustau-debaumaniere.com; menus €95-150; ☉) serves rarefied cuisine, including a (très gourmet) vegetarian menu, with ingredients plucked from its own organic garden. There is also fine accommodation (doubles from €290). Head chef and owner Jean-André Charial's kingdom also includes the Michelin-star restaurant and luxury rooms of **La Cabro d'Or** (☎04 90 54 33 21; www.lacabrodor.com; d from €245), also in Les Baux. Reservations are imperative for both.

The **tourist office** (☎04 90 54 34 39; www.lesbauxdeprovence.com; ☉9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5.30pm Sat & Sun) has information on accommodation. Parking within 800m of the village costs €3 to €5 or park for free at Cathédrale d'Images.



Admission to the theatre includes entry to the **museum** (museum only adult/child €4.60/3.60) across the road, which has



unassuming treasures. These include segments of the Roman survey registers (a precursor to the tax department) and the friezes that formed part of the theatre's scenery.

Follow montée Philbert de Chalons or montée Lambert to the top of **Colline St-Eutrope** (St Eutrope Hill; elevation 97m) for a bird's-eye view of the theatre, and for phenomenal views of the Mont Ventoux and the Dentelles de Montmirail. En route you pass the ruins of a 12th-century **château**, the former residence of the princes of Orange.

### Arc de Triomphe

ROMAN MONUMENT

Orange's 1st-century AD triumphal arch was restored in 2009, revealing exquisite detail: ornate sculptures commemorate the Romans' victories over the Gauls in 49 BC. The 19m-high arch stands at the northern end of tree-lined av de l'Arc de Triomphe, 450m northwest of the town centre.



## Festivals & Events

### Jazz Festival

MUSIC

Swings into town in the last week of June.

### Les Chorégies d'Orange

PERFORMING ARTS

(www.choregies.asso.fr) July and August, the Théâtre Antique comes alive with all-night concerts, weekend operas, and choral performances. Reserve tickets (€25 to €240) months ahead.



## Sleeping

### Hôtel Arène

HOTEL €€

(04 90 11 40 40; www.bestwestern.fr; place de Langes; d €78-180; 24h) With by far the best and biggest bathrooms in town, the Arène is the closest you'll find to business class in Orange. Despite being part of a chain, it still manages to retain some individuality, and has an entire floor of hypo-allergenic rooms. Kids love the two heated pools (one indoors, one out); parents appreciate the family-size rooms. Request a remodelled room, though the older ones remain very comfortable.

### Le Glacier

SMALL HOTEL €€

(04 90 34 02 01; www.le-glacier.com; 46 cours Aristide Briand; d €49-130; 24h) All 28 rooms are individually decorated with fresh fabrics, and impeccably maintained by charming owners, who pay attention to detail and keep the place spotless. They also rent bikes (per half-/full day €12/16). Equidistant to the theatre, tourist office and town centre.

### Hôtel Saint Jean

SMALL HOTEL €

(04 90 51 15 56; www.hotelsaint-jean.com; 1 Cours Pourtales; s €60-70, d €70-85, tr/q €95/110; 24h) We like the rooms' comfortable proportions and colourful Provençal fabrics at this simple, spiffy hotel, next to the theatre. Extras like free bike storage, soundproof windows and flat-screen TVs add value.

### Hôtel l'Herbier d'Orange

SMALL HOTEL €

(04 90 34 09 23; www.lherbierdorange.com, in French; 8 place aux Herbes; s/d/tr incl breakfast €55/60/70; 24h) New, friendly owners took over in 2009, installing double-pane windows and new bathrooms in this clean, basic hotel with central location. Evening aperitif included.

### Camping Le Jonquier

CAMPGROUND €

(04 90 34 49 48; www.campinglejonquier.com, in French; 1321 rue Alexis Carrel; 2 people €20-26; 24h) Perfect for activity junkies, with pool, minigolf, tennis, ping pong and hot tub. From the Arc de Triomphe walk 100m north, turn left onto rue du Bourbonnais and right again at the second roundabout onto rue Alexis Carrel. Find it 300m on your left.



## Eating

Stalls fill the town centre every Thursday for the weekly market. For self-catering, there's a **Petit Casino** (35 rue St-Martin).

### À la Maison

BISTRO €

(04 90 60 98 83; 4 place des Cordeliers; mains €10-16; Mon-Sat) There's no better spot on a warm night than the leafy fountain courtyard at this simple bistro, which serves consistently good homestyle cooking like grilled fish and steaks, pastas and composed salads.

### Le Forum

CLASSIC FRENCH €€

(04 90 34 01 09; 3 rue Mazeau; menus €19-39; lunch & dinner Tue-Fri & Sun, dinner Sat) The classical dishes, such as beef filet with morel sauce, are well executed, and service is warm and welcoming. Good for a quiet date.

### Le Parvis

GASTRONOMIC €€

(04 90 34 82 00; 55 cours Pourtales; 2-/3-course menus €23/26; lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) Nobody speaks above a whisper at Orange's top table, which, despite being a bit stiff, serves excellent food at good value.



# Vieux Port

## AN ITINERARY

Bold and busy and open-armed to the sea, Marseille is France's oldest city. Standing on the quai des Belges it's hard to get a sense of the extent of the old port, a kilometre long on either side, running down to the great bastions of St-Jean and St-Nicolas, which once had their guns trained on the rebellious population rather than out to sea. Immerse yourself in the city's history with this full-day itinerary.

Go early to experience the fish market **1**, where you'll swap tall tales with the gregarious vendors. Hungry? Grab a balcony seat at La Caravelle, where views of the Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde accompany your morning coffee. Afterwards, take a boat trip **2** to Château d'If, made famous by the Dumas novel, *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Alternatively, stay landside and explore the apricot-coloured alleys of Le Panier **3**, browsing the exhibits at the Centre de la Vieille Charité **4**.

In the afternoon, hop on the free cross-port ferry to the port's south side and wander into the Abbaye St-Victor **5** to see the bones of martyrs enshrined in gold. You can then catch the sunset from the stone benches in the Jardin du Pharo **6**. As the warm southern evening sets in, join the throngs on cours Honoré d'Estienne d'Orves, where you can drink pastis beneath a giant statue of a lion devouring a man – the *Milo de Croton* **7**.

## CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2013

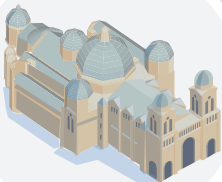
The largest urban renewal project in Europe, the Euroméditerranée project aims to rehabilitate the commercial Joliette docks along the same lines as London's Docklands. The city's green-and-white striped Cathédrale de la Major, for years abandoned in an area of urban wasteland, will form its centrepiece.

GLENN BEANLAND



### Le Panier

The site of the Greek town of Massilia, Le Panier woo's walkers with its sloping streets. Grand Rue follows the ancient road and opens out into place de Lenche, the location of the Greek market. It is still the place to shop for artisan products.



Cathédrale de la Major

**4**

Fort St-Jean

### Centre de la Vieille Charité

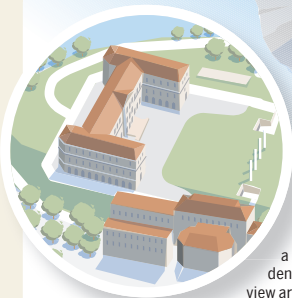
Before the 18th century, beggar hunters rounded up the poor for imprisonment. The Vieille Charité almshouse, which opened in 1749, improved their lot by acting as a workhouse. It's now an exhibition space and only the barred windows recall its original use.

Jardin & Palais du Pharo

**6**

### Jardin du Pharo

Built by Napoléon for the Empress Eugénie, the Pharo Palace was designed with its 'feet in the water'. Today it is a private centre, but the gardens with their magnificent view are open all day.







### Fish Market

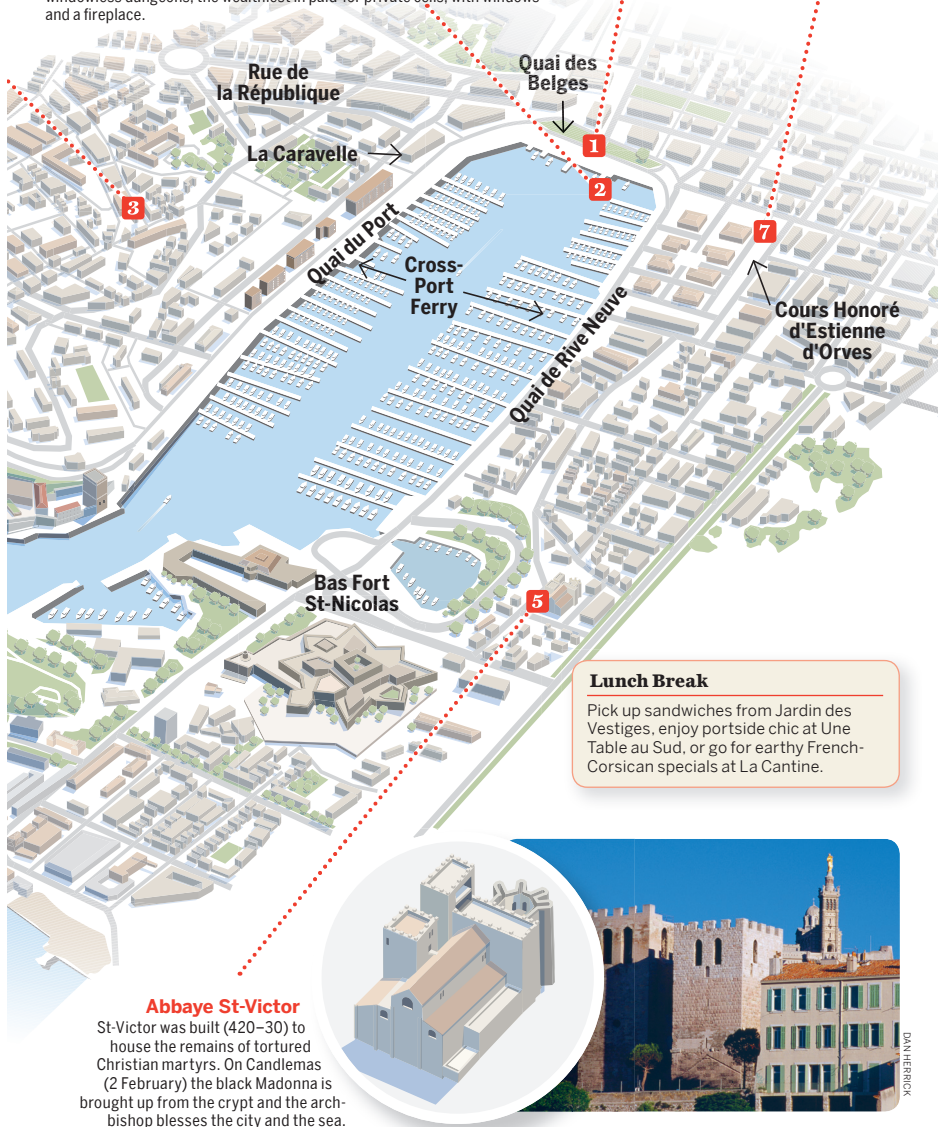
Marseille's small fish market still sets up each morning to hawk the daily catch. Take a lesson in local seafood, spotting sea squirts, scorpion fish, sea urchins and conger eels. Get there before 9am if you're buying.

### Milo de Croton

Subversive local artist Pierre Puget carved the savage *Milo de Croton* for Louis XIV. The statue, whose original is in the Louvre, is a meditation on man's pride and shows the Greek Olympian being devoured by a lion, his Olympic cup cast down.

### Frioul If Express

Catch the Frioul If Express to Château d'If, France's equivalent to Alcatraz. Prisoners were housed according to class: the poorest at the bottom in windowless dungeons, the wealthiest in paid-for private cells, with windows and a fireplace.

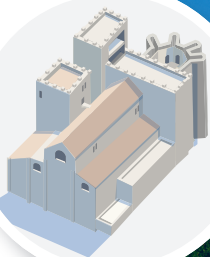


### Lunch Break

Pick up sandwiches from Jardin des Vestiges, enjoy portside chic at Une Table au Sud, or go for earthy French-Corsican specials at La Cantine.

### Abbaye St-Victor

St-Victor was built (420–30) to house the remains of tortured Christian martyrs. On Candlemas (2 February) the black Madonna is brought up from the crypt and the archbishop blesses the city and the sea.





## La Roselière

(3 rue Mazeau; mains €12-15; ☎Tue-Sat) Bric-a-brac crowds the ceiling while the chef-owner shouts jokes from the kitchen, often at other tables' expense. By your second glass of wine you'll be laughing along, unless you're shy, in which case don't come. Food is simple classics like lentils and sausages. Cash only.

## Brasserie Le Palace

(7 rue de la République; mains €10-14; ☎8am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) Outdoor leather sofas crowd the terrace good for coffee or a *plat du jour*.



## Information

**Post office** (679 bd Édouard Daladier) The only place in Orange that changes money.

**Tourist office** (☎04 90 34 70 88; www.otorange.fr; 5 cours Aristide Briand; ☎10am-6.30pm, closed Sun Oct-Mar) Hotel bookings.



## Getting There & Away

**BUS Trans Vaucluse** (www.cars-lieutaud.fr) buses stop on bd Édouard Daladier, southwest of the post office.

**Avignon** €3, 45 minutes

**Carpentras** €2, 45 minutes

**Vaison-la-Romaine** €3, 45 minutes

**TRAIN Train station** (www.voyages-sncf.com; av Frédéric Mistral)

**Avignon** €5.50, 15 minutes

**Lyon** €27, two hours

**Marseille** €22, 1½ hours

## Vaison-la-Romaine

POP 6392

Nestled in a valley at the crossroads of seven hills, Vaison-la-Romaine has long been a traditional exchange centre: this endures at its thriving Tuesday market. The village's rich Roman legacy is evident: 20th-century buildings jostle for space with the ruins of France's largest archaeological site. A Roman bridge crosses the glinting River Ouvèze, which divides a delightful pedestrianised centre and the walled, cobbled-street Cité Médiévale on the hilltop. Vaison is a good base for jaunts into the Dentelles' villages or an excursion on Mont Ventoux.



## Sights

### Gallo-Roman Ruins

(adult/child €8/3.50; ☎closed Jan-early Feb) The ruined remains of Vasio Vocontiorum, the

BISTRO €

BRASSERIE €

Roman city that flourished here from the 6th to 2nd centuries BC, fill two sites. The Pass, valid for two days, includes an audio-guide and admission to all Roman sites and the cathedral's cloister. From April to September there are free French-only **guided tours** of the sites, as well as thematic tours such as Roman gastronomy. Check the tourist office for schedules.

At **Puymin** (av du Général de Gaulle; ☎9.30am-6pm, closed noon-2pm Oct-Mar) see noblemen's houses, mosaics, the still-functioning **Théâtre Antique** (built around AD 20 for an audience of 6000) and an **archaeological museum** with a swag of fine statues, including likenesses of Hadrian and his wife Sabina.

Colonnaded shops, public baths' foundations and a limestone-paved street with an underground sewer are visible at **La Vil-lasse** (☎10am-noon & 2.30-6pm), to the west of the same road. **Maison au Dauphin** has splendid marble-lined fish ponds.

Your ticket also includes entry to the peaceful 12th-century Romanesque cloister at **Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Nazareth** (cloister €1.50; ☎10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm, closed Jan & Feb), a five-minute walk west of La Vil-lasse. This is also a great spot to take refuge from the summer heat.

## Cité Médiévale

MEDIEVAL CITY

Across the pretty **Pont Romain** (Roman Bridge), cobblestone alleyways known as *calades* carve through the stone walls up to an imposing 12th-century **château** (guided tours in French €2; ☎check with tourist office) built by the counts of Toulouse, from where there are bird's-eye views.



## Sleeping

The tourist office has lists of *chambres d'hôte* and self-catering accommodation.

## Hôtel Le Burrhus

DESIGN HOTEL €

(☎04 90 36 00 11; www.burrhus.com; 1 place de Montfort; d €55-87, apt €140; ☎) Right on Vaison's vibrant central square, this might look like a quaint old place from the outside, but inside, its 38 rooms have ultra-modern decor with cutting-edge designer fittings, original artwork and hip mosaic bathrooms. Parking €7.

## Hostellerie Le Beffroi

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎04 90 36 04 71; www.le-beffroi.com; rue de l'Évêché; d €90-144; ☎Apr-Jan; ☎) Within the medieval city's walls, this 1554-built *hostellerie* fills two buildings (the 'newer' one



was built in 1690). A fairy-tale hideaway, its 22 rough-hewn stone-and-wood-beamed rooms are romantically furnished, and its **restaurant** (menus €28 to €45) tumbles onto a rambling rose-and-herb garden with kids' swings. Parking €10.

### L'Évêché

B&amp;B €€

(☎04 90 36 13 46; <http://eveche.free.fr>; rue de l'Évêché, Cité Médiévale; d €80-135) With its groaning bookshelves, vaulted ceilings, higgledy-piggledy staircase, intimate lounges and exquisite art, this five-room *chambre d'hôte* is absolutely divine. Knowledgeable owners Jean-Loup and Aude lend bikes to explore the area.

### Le Moulin de César

FAMILY RESORT €

(☎04 90 36 00 78; [www.escapade-vacances.com/vaison](http://www.escapade-vacances.com/vaison); av César Geoffray; d half board per person €43; ☉Mar-Nov) Around 500m south-east of town, this modern family resort is set over peaceful, sprawling grounds on the edge of the river, with views of Mont Ventoux. This being France, half board (obligatory) includes wine. Parking free.

### Camping du Théâtre Romain

CAMPGROUND €

(☎04 90 28 78 66; [www.camping-theatre.com](http://www.camping-theatre.com); chemin de Brusquet; camping per 2 people €21; ☉mid-Mar-mid-Nov; 🚻) Opposite Théâtre Antique, the site is a little exposed to the Provençal sun but you can cool off in the pool.



### Eating



#### Moulin à Huile

GASTRONOMIC €€€

(☎04 90 36 20 67; [www.moulin-huile.com](http://www.moulin-huile.com); quai Maréchal Foch; lunch menu €40, dinner menus €60-75; ☉Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) Michelin-starred Chef Robert Bardot showcases his gastronomic prowess in a former olive-oil mill in the shadow of the Cité Médiévale. Sample a cross-section of his creations with the €75 tasting menu, or pick and choose from the handwritten *carte* (bring your eye-glasses). In summer, dine riverside on the outdoor terrace. Make a night of it by booking one of the three handsome **guestrooms** (€130-150; 🛏).

### La Lyryste

BISTRO €€

(☎04 90 36 04 67; 45 cours Taulignan; menus €18-36; ☉Wed-Sun) The contemporary Provençal menu at this charming bistro emphasizes seasonal-regional ingredients in dishes ranging from *bourride* (fish stew) to a foie gras tasting *menu* (€36).

Good-value three-course *menu* for €18. In summer book a table on the terrace.

### Self-Catering

Wines, honey and nougat are local specialties, but nothing compares to the area's delectable black truffles. They don't come cheap (€500 to €1000 per kg depending on season and rainfall) but a few shavings transform any dish.

A magnificent **market**, an attraction in its own right, snakes through the central streets Tuesday until 1pm.

### i Information

You can change money at hotels.

**Tourist office** (☎04 90 36 02 11; [www.vaison-la-romaine.com](http://www.vaison-la-romaine.com); place du Chanoine Sautel; ☉9am-noon & 2-5.45pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun, closed Sun mid-Oct-Mar) Inside the Maison du Tourisme et des Vins, just off av du Général de Gaulle.

### i Getting There & Away

The bus station is 400m east of the town centre on ave des Chorales, where **Autocars Lieutaud/Trans Vaucluse** ([www.cars-lieutaud.fr](http://www.cars-lieutaud.fr)) has an office.

**Avignon** via Orange; €6, 1½ hours

**Carpentras** €3, 45 minutes

**Orange** €3, 45 minutes

## Mont Ventoux

Visible from miles around, Mont Ventoux (1909m), nicknamed *le géant de Provence* (Provence's giant), stands like a sentinel over northern Provence. From its summit, accessible by road between May and October, vistas extend to the Alps and, on a clear day, the Camargue.

Because of the mountain's dimensions, every European climate type is present on its slopes, from Mediterranean on its lower southern reaches to Arctic on its exposed northern ridge. As you ascend the relentless gradients (which regularly feature in the Tour de France), temperatures can plummet by 20°C, and there's twice as much precipitation as on the plains below. The relentless mistral wind blows 130 days a year, sometimes at a speed of 250km/h. So bring warm clothes and rain gear, even in summer.

This unique and unusual climatic patchwork is reflected in the mountain's hugely diverse fauna and flora, which is



now actively protected by Unesco Biosphere Reserve status.

In winter, visitors can take in the joys of snow at the **Mont Serein** (1445m) **ski resort** (☎04 90 63 42 02; [www.standiondumontserein.com](http://www.standiondumontserein.com)), 5km from Mont Ventoux' summit on the D974. Snow generally melts by April, so the white glimmering stuff you see in summer are *lauzes*: broken white stones.

Piercing the sky to the west of Mont Ventoux are the spectacular limestone pinnacles of another walker's paradise, **Dentelles de Montmirail**. On the other side of the Dentelles sits the snug village of **Beaumes de Venise**, home to Frances's finest muscat.

The most common starting point for forays into the Ventoux area is the town of **Malaucaène**, a former summer residence of the Avignon popes.



## Activities

### Walking

Running from the River Ardèche east, the GR4 crosses the Dentelles de Montmirail before scaling the northern face of Mont Ventoux, where it meets the GR9. Both trails traverse the ridge before the GR4 branches eastwards to the Gorges du Verdon. Continuing on the GR9 takes you across the Monts du Vaucluse and the Luberon Range. Lonely Planet's *Walking in France* has information on walking in Luberon.

### MAPS

Didier-Richard's 1:50,000 map *Massif du Ventoux* includes Mont Ventoux, the Monts du Vaucluse and the Dentelles de Montmirail. More detailed are IGN's Série Bleue 1:25,000 *Mont Ventoux* (ref 3140ET) and *Carpentras/Vaison-la-Romaine/Dentelles de Montmirail* (ref 3040ET).

Area tourist offices also provide dozens of walking itineraries, including the excellent *Randonnées dans les Dentelles* (15 detailed, detachable itineraries in French, English and German; €5).

### Cycling

The Mont Ventoux is on par with Alpe d'Huez when it comes to epic, leg-breaking cycling ascents. So before you gingerly hop on your bicycle to tackle an ascent from Bédoin, Malaucaène or Sault, know that a 1½ to two-hour trip makes you Tour de France potential, and even cycling half an hour uphill requires serious pedal power. There are plenty of less-demanding options in the area.

Tourist offices distribute *Massif du Mont Ventoux: 9 Itinéraires VTT*, a free booklet

detailing nine mountain-bike itineraries ranging from 3.9km (one hour) to a gruelling 56.7km (seven to eight hours). See [www.lemontventoux.net/ventoux-anglais.htm](http://www.lemontventoux.net/ventoux-anglais.htm) for 16 cycling routes around Ventoux.

Rent road bikes/mountain bikes/tandems from €25/15/30 per half-day from **Vélo France Locations** (☎04 90 67 07 40; [www.larouteduventoux.com](http://www.larouteduventoux.com); rte du Ventoux, Bédoin), **Ventoux Bikes** (☎04 90 62 58 19; [www.ventoux-bikes.fr](http://www.ventoux-bikes.fr); 1 ave de Verdun, Malaucaène) or **Albion Cycles** (☎04 90 64 09 32; [www.albioncycles.com](http://www.albioncycles.com); rte de St-Trinit, Sault).

## i Information

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Beaumes de Venise** (☎04 90 62 94 39; [www.ot-beaumesdevenise.com](http://www.ot-beaumesdevenise.com); place du Marché; ☉9am-noon & 2-7pm Mon-Sat, to 5pm winter) Excellent info on nearby Dentelles and vineyards that sell the region's famous muscat.

**Malaucaène** (☎04 90 65 22 59; place de la Mairie; ☉10am-noon & 3-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat) Info for walkers and cyclists.

**Sault** (☎04 90 64 01 21; [www.saultenprovence.com](http://www.saultenprovence.com); av de la Promenade; ☉9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat)

### WEBSITES

**Destination Ventoux** ([www.destination-ventoux.com](http://www.destination-ventoux.com))

**Provence Cycling** ([www.provence-cycling.com](http://www.provence-cycling.com))

**Provence des Papes** ([www.hautvaucluse.com](http://www.hautvaucluse.com))

## i Getting There & Around

Reach Mont Ventoux by car from Sault via the D164; or (summer only) from Malaucaène or St-Estève via the D974, often snow-blocked until April.

## Carpentras

POP 29,601

Try to visit Carpentras on a Friday morning, when the streets spill over with more than 350 stalls laden with breads, honeys, cheeses, olives, fruit and a rainbow of *berlingots*, Carpentras' striped, pillow-shaped hard-boiled sweets. During winter the pungent truffle market murmurs with hushed-tones transactions. The season is kicked off by Carpentras' biggest fair, held during the **Fête de St-Siffrein** on 27 November, when more than 1000 stalls spill across town.

Markets aside, this slightly rundown agricultural town has a handful of architectural treats. A Greek trading centre and later a Gallo-Roman city, it became papal territory in 1229, and was also shaped by



a strong Jewish presence, as Jews who had been expelled from French crown territory took refuge here. The 14th-century synagogue is the oldest still in use in France.

## Sights

Hidden behind the cathedral, the **Arc Roman**, built under Augustus in the 1st century AD, is decorated with worn carvings of enslaved Gauls. Carpentras' museums are only open from April to September, from 10am to noon and 2pm to 6pm Wednesday to Monday. Admission is €2.

## Synagogue

HISTORIC SYNAGOGUE

(☎04 90 63 39 97; place Juiverie; ☉10am-noon & 3-5pm Mon-Thu, 10am-noon & 3-4pm Fri) The centre of Jewish life for centuries and still a place of worship today, Carpentras' moving synagogue bears witness to the centuries of persecution that Jewish people have endured. Although Jews were initially welcomed into papal territory, by the 17th century they were forced to live in ghettos established in Avignon, Carpentras, Cavaillon and L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue. Founded in 1367, the synagogue was rebuilt between 1741 and 1743 and restored in 1929 and 1954. The wood-panelled **prayer hall** holds 18th-century liturgical objects, while the ground floor houses older features such as the ablution basin and bakeries. The tourist office runs **tours** (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, April to September).

## Cathédrale St-Siffrein

CATHEDRAL

(☉7.30am-noon & 2-5pm, no visits during services) Église St-Siffrein, once Carpentras' cathedral, was built in the Méridional (southern French) Gothic style between 1405 and 1519 and is topped by a distinctive contemporary bell tower. Sadly, due to theft, its **Trésor d'Art Sacré** (Treasury of Religious Art), which holds precious 14th- to 19th-century religious relics, is now only available for public viewing during the Fête de St-Siffrein on 27 November.

## Musée Comtadin

CULTURAL MUSEUM

(243 bd Albin Durand) Artefacts relating to local history and folklore.

## Musée Duplessis

ART MUSEUM

(243 bd Albin Durand) Paintings spanning nine centuries.

## Musée Sobirats

DECOR MUSEUM

(112 rue du Collège) Ornate 18th-century residence filled with furniture and objets d'art in the Louis XV and Louis XVI styles.

## Hôtel Dieu

HISTORIC HOSPITAL

(place Aristide Briand) The former 18th-century hospital has a well-preserved old-fashioned **pharmacy** and a **chapel**.

## Sleeping & Eating

### Hôtel du Fiacre

HOTEL €€

(☎04 90 63 03 15; www.hotel-du-fiacre.com; 153 rue Vigne; d €68-110; ☉reception 8am-9pm; ☎) The faded grandeur of this endearing 18th-century mansion grows on you the minute you walk in: everything from the beautiful patio to the canopied beds, grand interior and genuine warmth of its owners will want to make you stay longer. Parking €5.

### Hôtel La Lavande

HOTEL €

(☎04 90 63 13 49; 282 bd Alfred Rogier; r €32-70) Well, you sure won't miss the nearly luminescent purple cladding, but thankfully the interior is not as brash, with basic, clean rooms. The restaurant downstairs (mains €7 to €15) serves North African fare as well as traditional, quick lunchtime fixes.

### Les Palmiers

BRASSERIE €

(☎04 90 63 12 31; 77 place du Général de Gaulle; mains from €9; ☉7am-10pm) This cheap and cheerful brasserie is packed to the rafters at lunchtime with colleagues tucking into the €9 *plat du jour* and lapping up their *café gourmand* (an espresso served with miniature desserts) before heading back to work.

### La Ciboulette

PROVENÇAL €€

(☎04 90 60 75 00; 30 place de l'Horloge; lunch/dinner menus from €18/24; ☉Tue-Sun) Fresh local ingredients taste all the better when eaten in the sunshine on the flowered patio. Cinnamon-coloured walls, well-spaced tables and a warm welcome create an easy air. In season, there's a gourmet truffle *menu*; year-round, old favourites are given new life – try the lavender crème brûlée.

### Chez Serge

PROVENÇAL €€

(☎04 90 63 21 24; www.chez-serge.com; 90 rue Cottier; lunch/dinner menus €17/35; ☉lunch Sun-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) Paris meets Provence when Serge serves up his culinary creations in a charming atmosphere. Good selection of truffle-flavoured dishes.

## Shopping

### Friday Market

MARKET

Carpentras' fantastic Friday morning market fills Rue d'Inguibert and most of av Jean Jaurès (and many side streets).



## Truffle Market

(place Aristide Briand; ☎9-10am Fri late Nov-early Mar) In winter brokers, merchants and wholesalers from all over France trade 'black diamonds'.

MARKET

## Chocolats Clavel

(30 Porte d'Orange) Spectacularly sculptured and delicious sweets.

SWEETS

## i Information

**Tourist office** (www.carpentras-ventoux.com; 97 place du 25 Août 1944; ☎9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat) Excellent website; multi-lingual guided **tours** (adult/child €4/2.50; ☎Apr-Sep). Free English-language *Discovery Circuit* brochure explains a *berlingot*-marked walking circuit.

## i Getting There & Away

There's no passenger-train service. The **bus station** (place Terradou) is 150m southwest of the tourist office. Schedules are available across the square at **Cars Comtadins** (192 av Clemenceau) and from **Cars Arnaud** (www.voyages-arnaud-carpentras.com, in French; 8 av Victor Hugo).

**Avignon** €2, 40 minutes

**Cavaillon** €3, 45 minutes

**L'Isle-sur-Sorgue** €2, 25 minutes

**Marseille** €14.50, 2 hours, 2 daily

**Vaison-la-Romaine** €3, 45 minutes (via **Malaucène**, at the southwest foot of Mont Ventoux. €2, 35 minutes)

## Fontaine de Vaucluse

POP 694

France's most powerful spring surges out of nowhere above the pretty little village of Fontaine de Vaucluse. All the rain that falls

within 1200 sq km gushes out here as the River Sorgue. The miraculous appearance of this crystal-clear flood draws 1.5 million tourists each year; aim to arrive early in the morning before the trickle of visitors becomes a deluge. It's at its most dazzling after heavy rain, but in drought times the normally surging hole looks like something out of a Harry Potter book, with eerily calm emerald water.

## 👁 Sightings

Most visitors come to see the spring.

**Musée d'Histoire 1939-1945** WWII MUSEUM (☎04 90 20 24 00; chemin de la Fontaine; adult/child €3.50/1.50; ☎10am-6pm Wed-Mon, Sat & Sun only Mar, Nov & Dec) Excellent examination of life in occupied France during WWII.

## Musée Pétrarque

LITERARY MUSEUM

(☎04 90 20 37 20; rive Gauche de la Sorgue; adult/child €3.50/1.50; ☎10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Wed-Mon, closed Nov-Mar) Devoted to the Italian Renaissance poet Francesco Petrararch, who lived in Fontaine de Vaucluse from 1337 to 1353. He expressed in heartbreaking verse his futile love for Laura, wife of Hugues de Sade.

## Ecomusée du Gouffre

CAVING MUSEUM

(☎04 90 20 34 13; chemin de la Fontaine; adult/child €5.50/4; ☎10am-noon & 2-6pm, closed mid-Nov-Jan) Follow a caving expert along underground tunnels to learn more about Fontaine's spring and the history of caves and caving.

## 🛏 Sleeping & Eating

### Hôtel du Poète

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎04 90 20 34 05; www.hoteldupoete.com; r €90-240; ☎closed Dec-mid-Feb; ♿☎☎) Fall asleep to the relaxing sound of rushing water in elegant rooms in a restored mill, stretch out by the pool and ponds, or chill in a jacuzzi that straddles a stream. Find this stunner by the river as you enter the village.

### La Figuière

PROVENÇAL €€

(☎04 90 20 37 41; www.la-figuiere.com; chemin de la Grangette; menus €20-28) Savour Provençal dishes (rabbit, sea bass etc) in the lovely front garden, or stay in one of the *chambres d'hôte* in the beautiful stone house.

### Auberge de Jeunesse

HOSTEL €

(☎04 90 20 31 65; www.fuaj.org; chemin de la Vignasse; dm incl breakfast & sheets €17.50; ☎reception 7.30-10am & 5.30-9pm, closed mid-Nov-Jan; ♿) In a lovely old farmhouse, about 800m

### WORTH A TRIP

## L'ISLE-SUR-LA-SORGUE

A moat of flowing water encircles the ancient and prosperous town of L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, 7km west of Fontaine. This 'Venice of Provence' is stuffed to bursting with antique shops: disused mills and factories along the main road contain seven **antiques villages** (☎10am-6pm Sat-Mon) which house around 300 dealers. For bargains, the giant four-day antiques fairs held in mid-August and over Easter are the best bet.



south of town, this peaceful hostel with a kitchen is popular with families and hikers (it's on the GR6 trail). In summer you can pitch your tent in the garden.

## i Information

**Tourist office** (www.oti-delasorgue.fr; place de la Colonne; ☎10am-1pm & 2-6pm)

## i Getting There & Away

Fontaine de Vaucluse is 21km southeast of Carpentras and 30km west of Apt. **Trans Vaucluse/Voyages Raoux** (www.voyages-raoux.fr, in French) buses operate from Avignon (€3, one hour) via L'Isle-sur-Sorgue.

Parking costs €3.

# THE LUBERON

The picture-perfect area that makes up the Luberon takes the shape of a rectangle on a map. But navigating its bucolic rolling hills, golden-hued perched villages and hidden valleys is a bit like fitting together a jigsaw puzzle. The Luberon is named after its main mountain range, which is split in the centre by the Combe de Lourmarin, a beautiful narrow river valley. Luberon's hues, fragrances and flavours subtly transform in tune with the seasons.

The region's capital, Apt, is a central hub for practicalities, but the heart of the Luberon is in the tiny stone villages fanning out across the countryside, which encompasses a 1200-sq-km regional park, the Abbaye de Sénanque and ancient, stone *bories* (dry-walled huts). Luberon is best seen with your own wheels (motorised or leg-powered). **Le Luberon en Vélo** (www.veloloisirluberon.com) trails has a network of 236km signposted routes.

## Apt

POP 11,450

Sleepy little Apt comes alive during its Saturday morning market brimming with local specialities, otherwise it's primarily a hub for shopping or practicalities.

## 👁 Sights

**FREE Confiserie Kerry Aptunion**

SWEETS FACTORY

(☎04 90 76 31 43; rte Nationale 100, quartier Salignan; hshop 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, tours by reservation) The world's larg-



## COULEUR PASS

Sold at local tourist offices, the handy Couleur Pass Luberon (€5) gives a discount of up to 50% on entry fees for 16 major tourist sights and activities in the region.

est crystallised-fruits factory: it candies 30 tonnes of cherries a day. It offers a free film, tastings and tours. The factory is 2.5km west of town.

**FREE Fondation Blachère** ART GALLERY

(☎04 32 52 06 15; 384 av des Argiles; ☎2-6.30pm Tue-Sun) Runs a series of interesting art exhibitions.



## Sleeping



**Le Couvent**

B&B €€

(☎04 90 04 55 36; www.loucouvent.com, in French; 36 rue Louis Rousset; d €95-120; @☎) Hidden behind a high stone wall and flowering gardens in the town centre, this stunning *maison d'hôte* occupies a 17th-century convent and offers exceptional value: get one of just five sumptuous rooms and breakfast in a vaulted stone dining room.

**Hôtel l'Aptois**

HOTEL €

(☎04 90 74 02 02; www.aptois.fr, in French; 289 cours Lauze de Perret; d €40-66) Cyclist-friendly stylish hotel with good wheelchair access.

**Camping Municipal Les Cèdres**

CAMPGROUND €

(☎/fax 04 90 74 14 61; www.camping-les-cedres.fr, in French; rte de Rustrel; tent €4.30; ☎mid-Feb-mid-Nov) Back-to-basics riverside campground just out of town.



## Eating

**L'Intramuros**

PROVENÇAL €€

(☎04 90 06 18 87; 120 rue de la République; menus €24-30; ☎Tue-Sat) Beloved by locals for its 'instinctive Provençal' cooking in a 19th-century grocery shop filled with nostalgic bric-a-brac. On Saturday a fresh-as-it-gets market soup bubbles aromatically in its open kitchen.

**Les Délices de Léa**

BISTRO €

(☎04 90 74 32 77; 87 rue de la République; mains €10; ☎Tue-Sat) Aptois frequent this place for Léa's tender green salads and inventive *plats du jour*.



# Lavender Trail

Pilgrims come from all over to follow the Routes de la Lavande ([www.routes-lavande.com](http://www.routes-lavande.com)), tracking Provence's aromatic purple bloom. In flower from June to August, it usually hits peak splendour in late July. Cruise the fields, visit mountainside distilleries or scoop up all things lavender at abundant local markets.

## Abbaye Notre-Dame de Sénanque

**1** Follow the winding D177 north of Gordes to this idyllic 12th-century Cistercian abbey (p808), tucked between hills and surrounded by brilliant fields of lavender. Resident monks tend the crops and stock their shop with monk-made goodies.

## Château du Bois

**2** Provence is dotted with distilleries, but if you make it to tiny Lagarde d'Apt (p809) you're in for a treat: 80 hectares of Lavande des Alpes de Haute Provence, 'true lavender' (*Lavandula angustifolia*).

## Sault

**3** The slopes of Mont Ventoux (p801), north of Lagarde d'Apt, make for prime high-altitude lavender. Aim to visit during the Fête de la Lavande ([www.saultenprovence.com](http://www.saultenprovence.com)), usually on 15 August.

## Forcalquier

**4** Folks come from throughout the region for the booming Monday-morning market in Forcalquier (p812). An embarrassment of riches, the market has vendors selling lavender everything, plus mountain honeys, creamy cheeses and handmade sausages.

## Plateau de Valensole

**5** For sheer heady expansiveness, you can't beat the Plateau de Valensole's carpets of lavender, stretching, dreamlike, as far as the eye can see. Cruise across it on the D6 or D8 east of Manosque, and the A51.

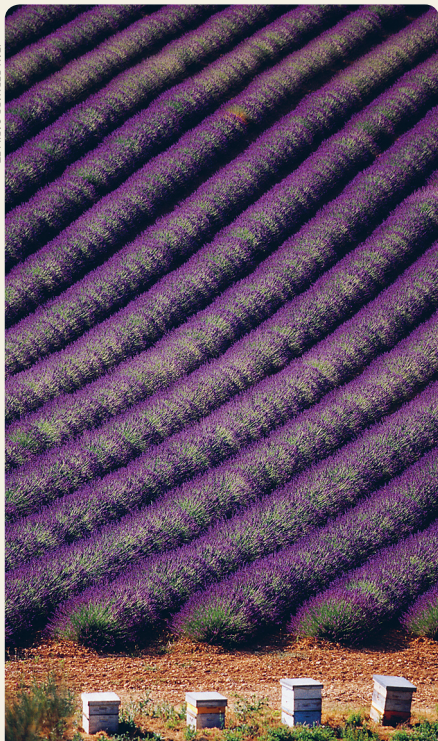
### Clockwise from top left

Rows of lavender, Sault; Bunches of lavender for sale at a local market; A carpet of purple blooms, Plateau de Valensole

DAVID TOMLINSON



JEAN-BERNARD CARILLET









**Thym, te Voilà**

(☎04 90 74 28 25; 59 rue St-Martin; mains €10; ☉11.30am-6pm Tue-Sat) For a sit-down meal in the town centre.

**Sylla**

(☎04 90 74 95 80; N100; ☉9am-7pm Mon-Sat) West of Apt, this local winery serves cheese and light meals with its wine.

**Le Fournil du Luberon**

(☎04 90 74 20 52; place de la Bouquerie; ☉7am-7pm Tue-Sat, to 1pm Sun) Apt's best bakery, directly across from the tourist office.

**Information**

**Maison du Parc** (www.parcduluberon.fr, in French; 60 place Jean Jaurès; ☉8.30am-noon & 1-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat, closed Sat & Sun Oct-Mar) Information on Parc Naturel Régional du Luberon and area history.

**Tourist office** (☎04 90 74 03 18; www.luberon-apt.fr; 20 av Philippe de Girard; ☉9.30am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun) Excellent source for activities, excursions and walks; makes hotel bookings. Sells maps like 1:25,000 IGN (32420T) Apt/Parc Naturel Régional du Luberon (€9.50).

**Getting There & Away**

The **bus station** (250 av de la Libération) is east of the city centre. **Trans Vaucluse** (www.vaucluse.fr, in French) buses go to Aix-en-Provence (€5, two hours), Avignon (€5, 1½ hours), and Cavaillon (€3, 45 minutes, four daily).

**North of Apt****GORGES**

Forming an amphitheatre over the Rivers Sorgue and Calavon, the tiered village of Gordes sits spectacularly on the white rock face of the Vaucluse plateau. In the early evenings the village is theatrically lit by the setting sun, turning the stone buildings a shimmering gold. Gordes has top billing on many tourists' must-see lists (particularly those of high-profile Parisians) so high season sees a cavalcade of coaches.

**Sights****Village des Bories**

(☎04 90 72 03 48; adult/child €6/4; ☉9am-sunset) You'll spot beehive-shaped *bories* while you're buzzing around Provence (1610 have been counted to date), but the Village des Bories, 4km southwest of

BISTRO €

WINE &amp; CHEESE €

BAKERY €

Gordes, has loads of them. Reminiscent of Ireland's *clochàn*, these dry-walled huts constructed from slivers of limestone were first built in the area in the Bronze Age. Their original purpose isn't known, but over time they've been used as homes, workshops, wine cellars and silkworm huts. This 'village' contains about 20 *bories*, best visited early in the morning or just before sunset for the interplay of light and shadow.

**Abbaye Notre-Dame de Sénanque**

ABBEY

(☎04 90 72 05 72; guided tour in French adult/child €7/3; ☉tours by reservation) Framed by fields of lavender in July, this picture-postcard Cistercian abbey, 4km northwest of Gordes off the D177, sits in a magical valley. The abbey was founded in 1148 and is inhabited by a few monks who celebrate mass at noon, Tuesday to Saturday, and 10am Sunday. A 1½-hour walk will get you to or from Gordes.

**Sleeping & Eating****Le Mas de la Beaume**

B&amp;B €€

(☎04 90 72 02 96; www.labeaume.com; at entrance Gordes village; d €125-150; ☉) Behind a stone wall, this impeccable five-room *maison d'hôte* is the pride and joy of hosts Wendy and Miguel. The 'blue room' has views of Gordes' château and bell tower from the bed. Home-grown produce from the garden arrives on your plate at breakfast.

**Le Mas Regalade**

B&amp;B €€

(☎04 90 76 90 79; www.masregalade-luberon.com; D2, quartier de la Sénancole, Les Imberts; d from €110; ☉☉) Conscientious owner Stefane has artfully decorated rooms with both modern touches and charming antiques. The artefacts spread poolside too, where a vintage Citroën peeks out from hedgerows of lavender and rosemary. Located 3.5km south of Gordes.

**Le Mas Tourteron**

GASTRONOMIC €€€

(☎04 90 72 00 16; chemin de St-Blaise, Les Imberts; www.mastourteron.com; menus from €45) Dining at the lilac-clothed tables in the stone dining room or amid the flourishing gardens of chef Elisabeth Bourgeois-Baique and her sommelier husband Philippe's welcoming farmhouse is like eating at the home of friends. Elisabeth's seasonally changing menus and her legendary desserts marry with wines hand-picked by Philippe from over 200 vintages. Find it



3.5km south of Gordes, signposted off the D2. Check website for hours.

### **i Information**

**Tourist office** (☎04 90 72 02 75; [www.gordes-village.com](http://www.gordes-village.com); place du Château; ☎9am-noon & 2-6pm)

## **ROUSSILLON**

Some two millennia ago, the Romans used the ochreous earth around the spectacular village of Roussillon, set in the valley between the Plateau de Vaucluse and the Luberon range, for producing pottery glazes. These days the whole village, even grave-stones in the cemetery, is built of the red-dish stone.

From the town, take a 45-minute walk along the **Sentier des Ocres** (Ochre Trail; adult/child €2.50/free; ☎9am-7.30pm Jul & Aug, to 5pm Mar-11 Nov). Within fairy-tale groves of chestnuts, maritime pines and scrub, the trail leads you through a stunning sunset-coloured paint palette of ochre formations.



**Conservatoire des Ocres et de la Couleur** (Ochre & Colour Conservatory;

☎04 90 05 66 69; [www.okhra.com](http://www.okhra.com), in French; rte d'Apt; guided tours adult/child €6/4; ☎9am-7pm, Wed-Sun only Sep-Jun) is a unique nonprofit organisation celebrating everything about colour, in a conscientious, sustainable way. Located in an old ochre factory on the D104 east towards Apt, it holds workshops (some in English), explores the properties of ochre, and has a fantastic shop.

In **Gargas**, 7km east of Roussillon, Europe's last remaining ochre quarry **Les Mines d'Ocre de Broux** (☎04 90 06 22 59; admission €7.50; ☎10am-7pm) produces around 1000 tonnes a year, 45% of which is exported. The parts of the 45km of mines that are open to the public seem like a serene mineral church of spires.

The friendly owner of **Les Passiflores** (☎04 90 71 43 08; [www.passiflores.fr](http://www.passiflores.fr); Hameau des Huguets; d incl breakfast from €70; ☎) welcomes you into this quiet *chambre d'hôte*, tucked into a back square in the tiny hamlet of Huguets, south of Roussillon. Tidy rooms have king-sized beds with floral quilts. The pool is a natural one, with plants in it.

Eat under the willow trees at unpretentious working *ferme auberge* **Les Grands Camps** (☎04 90 74 67 33; Le Chêne; menus adult/child incl wine & coffee €26/13; ☎lunch Sun, dinner Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat Jul & Aug, lunch Sun, dinner Fri & Sat Sep-Jun). Not far from Gargas' ochre quarry, it serves up heaping feasts of

farm-fresh duck, lamb and the like. Take the signposted dirt road north from the hamlet Le Chêne.

For more information about the area, visit the **Tourist office** (☎04 90 05 60 25; [www.roussillon-provence.com](http://www.roussillon-provence.com), in French; place de la Poste; ☎10am-noon & 1.30-5pm Mon-Sat)

## **ST-SATURNIN-LÈS-APT & AROUND**

Enjoy rooftop views of St-Saturnin-lès-Apt, 9km north of Apt, and the surrounding Vaucluse hilltops by climbing to the ruins atop the village or from the 17th-century windmill, 1km north of the village off the D943 to Sault. Lunch at the welcoming **Le Restaurant L'Estrade** (☎04 90 71 15 75; 6 av Victor Hugo; menus from €13; ☎lunch), run by friendly women who prepare a seasonal menu.

In **Lagarde d'Apt**, 20km northeast of Apt, volunteers at the **Observatoire Sirene** (☎04 90 75 04 17; [www.obs-sirene.com](http://www.obs-sirene.com), in French; day/night/child €10/40/free; ☎by reservation) teach you about astronomy amid the lavender fields by day; but the best time to visit is during an all-night star-gazing session.

Lagarde d'Apt is also home to a 800,000-sq-metre lavender farm, **Château du Bois** (☎04 90 76 91 23; [www.lechateaudubois.com](http://www.lechateaudubois.com)), where a 2km-long lavender trail blazes from late June until mid-July when the sweet-smelling flower is harvested.



**Domaine des Andéols** (☎04 90 75 50 63; [www.domainedesandeols.com](http://www.domainedesandeols.com);

D2, 2km west of St-Saturnin-lès-Apt; ste €260-770; ☎Apr-Nov; ☎☎☎), Alain Ducasse's ode to design, sits in a velvet-green valley with views from the infinity pool to russet promontories. Individual houses are decorated down to the last cutting-edge detail. Or head to the **restaurant** (menus €39 to €59); on summer nights candlelit tables cluster beneath stars.



**Colorado Provençal** (☎04 32 52 09 75; ☎9am-dusk), on the eastern side of the Luberon, is a savage landscape of red-ochre sand with extraordinary rock formations like the fiery upright *Cheminée de Fée* (Fairy Chimney).

Near Rustrel, deep within the Colorado, and bordered by forest, **La Forge** (☎04 90 04 92 22; [www.laforge.com](http://www.laforge.com); Notre-Dame des Anges; d incl breakfast €86-199; ☎☎) is an 1840-built former iron foundry that has been transformed into an incredible *maison d'hôte*. No credit cards.



**La Table de Pablo** (☎04 90 75 45 18; [www.latabledepablo.com](http://www.latabledepablo.com); Hameau



Les Petits Cléments; lunch/dinner menus from €16/28; ☺closed Wed, lunch Thu & Sat), near Villars, is home to young chef Thomas Gallardo. On the heels of his first Michelin mention, he wows with inventive gastronomic creations such as a delectable maize soup with chestnuts and tasso, or a frappé of soft, white cheese. He has created a comfortable, modern dining room decorated with local art and it is well worth the excursion through the rolling cherry orchards. Gallardo also offers cooking courses.

## South of Apt

South of the N100, the deep Combe de Lourmarin carves a north-south divide through the Luberon massif. Le Petit Luberon (Little Luberon) sits on the western side and its rocky landscape is sprinkled with cake-decoration-like villages *perchés* (perched villages) overlooking thick cedar forests and Côtes du Luberon vineyards. To its east, Le Grand Luberon takes in dramatic gorges, grand fortresses and lavender fields.

### 👁 Sights & Activities

Highlights include **Bonnieux**, which burst onto cinema screens in *A Good Year* (2006) as the village where Russell Crowe's character Max Skinner, a British financier, finds *joie de vivre* in the vineyards of Provence.

**Lacoste** harbours the 9th-century **Château de Lacoste**, where the notorious Marquis de Sade (1740–1814) retreated when his writings became too scandalous for Paris. The erotic novels penned by the marquis (who gave rise to the term 'sadism') were only freely published after WWII. The 45-room palace remained an eerie ruin until transformed by couturier Pierre Cardin into a 1000-seat theatre and opera stage hosting July's month-long **Festival de Lacoste** (www.festivaldelacoste.com).

Scaling the steep streets to **Ménerbes**, moored on a hilltop, rewards you with uninterrupted views. The maze of streets conceals a 12th-century village church and the fabulous **Maison de la Truffe et du Vin** (☎04 90 72 52 10; www.vin-truffe-luberon.com; place de l'Horloge; ☺10am–12.30pm & 2–5pm Thu–Sat, daily Jul & Aug), where the Brotherhood of Truffles and Wine of Luberon represents 60 domaines and sells their wines at rock-bottom prices. In July and August it organises two-hour wine-tasting sessions (€20) and truffle workshops (€95).

Ménerbes captured the attention of millions when it was memorably rendered by British author Peter Mayle. The lavishly detailed books *A Year in Provence* and *Toujours Provence* recount renovating a *mas* just outside the village in the late 1980s. Mayle subsequently sold up and moved abroad, though the Luberon's charm has lured him back to Lourmarin. His former home, 2km southeast of Ménerbes on the D3 to Bonnieux, is the second house on the right after the football pitch.

**Oppède-le-Vieux**, a medieval hilltop village 6km southwest of Ménerbes, was abandoned in 1910 by villagers who moved down the valley to the cultivated plains to earn their living. Today, a handful of artists (population 20) lives here among the cool ruins. The **Sentier Vigneron d'Oppède**, a 1½-hour winegrowers' trail, winds through olive groves, cherry orchards and vineyards.

Purple lavender carpets the **Plateau de Claparèdes** area between Buoux (west), Sivergues (south), Auribeau (east) and picture-postcard **Saignon** (north). Cycle, walk or motor through the lavender fields and along the northern slopes of **Mourre Nègre** (1125m). Stop for views of gorgeous Saignon before you wander its streets.

At the base of the Combe de Lourmarin and, unlike many of the Luberon's precarious hilltop townships, easily accessed, the alluring village of **Lourmarin** makes for a lovely stroll with its charming streets, cafés and a lively **Friday morning market**.

### 🛏 Sleeping

#### Le Clos du Buis

HOTEL B&B €€

(☎04 90 75 88 48; www.leclosdubuis.fr; rue Victor Hugo, Bonnieux; d €84–112, cottages per week from €300; ☺mid-Feb–mid-Nov; 🏠🚗🐕🐶) Smack-dab in the village, this stone town house spills out to a vast garden. The dining room serves up panoramic views along with *tables d'hôtes* (set menus at a fixed price; by reservation), and there's a self-catering kitchen. One room is wheelchair accessible.

#### TOP CHOICE Auberge de Presbytère

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎04 90 74 11 50; www.auberge-presbytere.com; place de la Fontaine, Saignon; d €85–145; ☺closed mid-Jan–mid-Feb) In the 11th and 12th centuries it was three presbyteries. Now it is a village inn with beautiful wood-beamed rooms and an enticing terrace **restaurant**



(menus €26 to €35) overlooking the village fountain. Try to get a room with views of the ruins and valley in the rear.

### La Magnanerie

B&amp;B €€

(☎04 90 72 42 88; www.magnanerie.com; rte de Bonnieux, Lieu-dit le Roucas, Ménerbes; d €95; ☺mid-Mar–mid-Nov & mid-Dec–early Jan; ☺☺) At this welcoming *maison d'hôte* in the serene, misty hills enjoy one of six stylish rooms and homemade jams and cobbles at breakfast. Guests can barbecue in the summer kitchen. Find it 200m down a lane, signposted off the D103. No credit cards.

### Le Mas de Foncaudette

B&amp;B €€

(☎04 90 08 42 51; www.foncaudette.com; signposted off the D27 btwn Lourmarin & Puyvert; d €110; ☺☺☺) Perfect colourful rooms, and some suites ideal for families, surround a fig-tree-shaded central courtyard. Sweeping grounds enjoy views of the valley.

### Chambre de Séjour avec Vue

B&amp;B €€

(☎04 90 04 85 01; www.chambreavecvue.com, in French; Saignon; d/studio €80/100) Husband and wife artists Kamila Regent and Pierre Jaccaud are the creative force behind this amazing 16th-century village house turned *chambre d'hôte*–art studio.



### Eating



### Véranda

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎04 90 72 33 33; 104 av Marcellin Poncet, Ménerbes; lunch mains €10–13, dinner menus €38; ☺lunch Tue–Sun, dinner Tue–Sat) Well-travelled chef Laurent Jouin is doing impressive things in the kitchen of his excellent establishment high up in the village, with views overlooking the valley. Effortlessly elegant, the magnificent meals are built from seasonal fresh fruit and vegetables. The smoked salmon ravioli is to die for.



### Ferme Auberge Le Castelas

FARM MEAL €€

(Chez Gianni; ☎04 90 74 60 89; Sivergues; menus incl wine €25–30; ☺by reservation only Mar–Dec) Well off any track, beaten or not, this farm welcomes celebs such as Catherine Deneuve, who drop in via helicopter to pass around heaping platters at long, shared timber tables. Fresh-from-the-farm feasts include bite-sized toast topped with *tomme* (a mild cows'-milk cheese) and whole, roasted pigs.

### Auberge La Fenièvre

GASTRONOMIC, HOTEL €€€

(☎04 90 68 11 79; www.reinesammur.com; rte de Cadenet; ☺☺) Visit this restored old post office, 3km south of Lourmarin, for an excel-

lent meal or an idyllic night's stay (single/double from €150/180). This is the exquisite domain of Michelin-starred Reine Sammut, who tends her own kitchen garden to supply her outstanding **restaurant** (lunch/dinner menus from €46/80) and her simpler, but equally wonderful **bistro** (menus from €35).

### La Bastide de Capelongue

GASTRONOMIC, HOTEL €€€

(☎04 90 75 89 78; www.capelongue.com; lunch/dinner menus from €70/120; ☺closed mid-Nov–mid-Mar) High above Bonnieux sits the bastion of wunderkind chef Édouard Loubet, who moved here with his two Michelin stars from Le Moulin de Lourmarin. The hotel (doubles from €160) is impeccably decorated by Édouard's mother, and his grandmother is the inspiration for many of his renowned recipes.

### Café du Progrès

CAFÉ €

(☎04 90 72 22 09; place Albert Roure, Ménerbes; menus €13–16; ☺lunch, bar 6am–midnight) This tobacconist-newsagent-bar, run by good-humoured Patrick, hasn't changed much since it opened a century ago. This utterly authentic spot is great for a lunch stop and taking in a spectacular sweep of the countryside.

### Auberge de l'Aiguebrun

INN, BISTRO €€€

(☎04 90 04 47 00; www.aubergedelaiguebrun.fr; d €175–205; ☺☺) Dine at stone tables on a cobbled terrace with riverside views (lunch/dinner *menu* €27/45), and stroll through gardens graced with peacocks, a greenhouse and dovecote. The inn is hidden in the dramatic heart of the Combe de Lourmarin, 6km southeast of Bonnieux off the D943.

### L'Art Glacier

ICE CREAMERY €

(☎04 90 77 75 72; Les Hautes Terres hamlet; ☺vary) Go further afield to find ice cream that's an art. Michel and Sigrid Perrière handcraft mind-boggling varieties of the sweet stuff: from lavender to sesame to casis. The ice-creamery sits between Ansouis and La Tour d'Aigues on a hilltop off the D9 (look for the signs posted on roundabouts) and has views all around.

## NORTHEASTERN PROVENCE

Haute-Provence's heady mountain ranges arc across the top of the Côte d'Azur to the Italian border, creating a far-flung crown of snowy peaks and precipitous valleys.



To the west, a string of sweet, untouristy hilltop villages and lavender fields drape the Vallée de la Durance. Magical Moustiers Ste-Marie is a gateway to the plunging white waters of Europe's largest canyon, the Gorges du Verdon. In the east, the 'valley of wonders' wows with 36,000 Bronze Age rock carvings. In the far north are the winter ski slopes and summer mountain retreats of the Ubaye and Blanche Valleys. Outside of ski areas, many establishments close in winter.

## Vallée de la Durance

At the western edge of Haute-Provence, the winding waters of the 324km-long River Durance, an affluent of the Rhône, follow the Via Domitia, the road from Italy that allowed the Romans to infiltrate the whole of France.

### Sights & Activities

Highlights of the region include **Pays de Forcalquier**, delightfully off mass-tourism's radar, which shelters sweet hilltop villages and wildflower-strewn countryside. At its heart, the eponymous town, **Forcalquier**, sits atop a rocky perch and its fantastic **Monday market** draws locals from throughout the region. Steep steps lead to its gold-topped **citadel** and octagonal chapel, where carillon concerts are held most Sundays from 11.30am to 12.30pm. On the way up, peruse the local artists' workshops packed with pottery and furniture.

There are few more peaceful places in Provence than the 13th-century **Prieuré de Salagon** (☎04 92 75 70 50; [www.musee-de-salagon.com](http://www.musee-de-salagon.com), in French; adult/child €6/3.60; ☉10am-7.30pm, 2-5pm Oct & Feb-Apr, 2-5pm Sun Nov & Dec, closed Jan), 4km south of Forcalquier outside the walled city of Mane. Tour excellent gardens or see concerts and exhibitions in the restored priory.

In **St-Michel l'Observatoire**, a stroll up to the hilltop overlook passes along winding walkways and tiny ateliers. After the 12th-century Église Haute, arrive at a 360-degree view from the Luberon to the Alps. Or visit the nearby **Observatoire de Haute-Provence** (☎04 92 70 64 00; [www.obs-hp.fr](http://www.obs-hp.fr), in French; adult/child €2.50/1.50), a national research centre. Buy tickets for the 30-minute guided tour from the ticket office in St-Michel's village square.



### **Prieuré de Ganagobie** (☎04 92

68 00 04; ☉3-5pm Tue-Sun), 10km south of Les Mées, offers the chance to stroll the quiet hilltop grounds and soak up the ethereal magic of this 10th-century working Benedictine monastery. The chapel is the only enclosed section of the monastery open to visitors. Its exquisite 12th-century floor mosaic is the largest of its kind in France. The shop stocks handmade soaps, honeys and the like, all made by the monks, and houses a small collection of artefacts found on-site.

The stunner in **Sisteron** is its spectacular citadel, an imposing 3rd- to 16th-century fortress perched on a rock above a transverse valley. The town itself has a lived-in feeling and there's not a whiff of the tourist trap. The tourist office conducts 1¼-hour walking **tours** (€1) and open-air classical-music concerts are held during the Festival des Nuits de la Citadelle from mid-July to mid-August.



### **Sleeping & Eating**



#### **Le Vieil Aiglun**

B&B €€

(☎04 92 34 67 00; [www.vieil-aiglun.com](http://www.vieil-aiglun.com); outside Aiglun; s/d €65/85; ☉) Retreat to a magical hilltop enclave in a painstakingly restored Celtic village. An old church, dating from 1555, still sits behind this one-of-a-kind gorgeous *chambre d'hôte*, where every detail is looked after. Located 11km southwest of Digne-les-Bains.

#### **Mas Saint-Joseph**

B&B €€

(☎04 92 62 47 54; [www.lemassaintjoseph.com](http://www.lemassaintjoseph.com); Châteauneuf-Val-St-Donat; d/q from €54/92; ☉Apr-Oct; ☉☉) Location, location, location: this converted farmhouse overlooks a sweeping valley, and is surrounded by layers of terraces and flower beds. Historic wood accents stand in beautiful contrast to serene whitewashed rooms. Amenities include jacuzzi and shared kitchen space. On the D951 to Sisteron.

#### **Auberge La Bannette**

B&B, TRADITIONAL FRENCH €

(☎04 92 34 68 88; [www.aubergelabannette.com](http://www.aubergelabannette.com), in French; s/d from €48/53) The friendly Wisner family runs this farmstead overlooking Thoard village. Rustic cabins sit beneath star-strewn skies, and the nightly meal is like a feast from the middle ages (*menu* for guests €20).



**La Magnanerie**

HOTEL, GASTRONOMIC €€

(☎04 92 62 60 11; [www.la-magnanerie.net](http://www.la-magnanerie.net); N85; menus €17-50; ☺lunch & dinner) Relax in the understatedly elegant dining room of this recent Logis de France award-winner, 1km north of Château-Arnoux St-Auban. Magnificently presented dishes include duck cooked to perfection with a drizzle of raspberry reduction. Stylish rooms start at €59.

**Restaurant La Marmite du Pêcheur**

GASTRONOMIC €€

(☎04 92 34 35 56; Les Mées; menus €20-56; ☺lunch & dinner Thu-Mon) Chef Christophe Roldan prepares decadent multicourse menus rich in foie gras and tender, slow-cooked lamb.

**Information**

**Forcalquier tourist office** (☎04 92 75 10 02; [www.forcalquier.com](http://www.forcalquier.com); 13 place du Bourguet; ☺9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat)

**Gorges du Verdon**

Under the protection of the Parc Naturel Régional du Verdon since 1997, Europe's largest canyon, the plunging Gorges du Verdon, slices a 25km swathe through Provence's limestone plateau.

The main gorge begins at Rougon near the confluence of the Verdon and the Jabron Rivers, and then winds westwards until the Verdon's green waters flow into Lac de Ste-Croix. At a dizzying 250m to 700m deep, the gorge's floors are just 8m to 90m wide, and its overhanging rims are from 200m to 1500m apart. The two main jumping-off points for exploring the gorges are the villages of Moustiers Ste-Marie in the west and Castellane, east of Rougon.

**Sights**

The deep floors are only accessible by foot or raft. Motorists, horse riders and cyclists take in staggering panoramas from two vertigo-inducing cliffside roads. In Castellane, **Chapelle Notre Dame du Roc** is perched spectacularly above town on a needlelike rock.

Dubbed the Etoile de Provence (Star of Provence), the charming little village **Moustiers Ste-Marie** (population 635, elevation 634m) makes a fair claim to the title. Tucked between two limestone cliffs, it overlooks open fields and far-off mountains. A 227m-long gold chain bearing a

shining star is suspended over the town, so legend claims, by the Knight of Blacas, grateful to have returned safely from the Crusades. Beneath the star, clinging to a cliff ledge, 14th-century **Chapelle Notre Dame de Beauvoir** (tours adult/child €3/free; ☺tours 10am Tue & Thu Jul-Aug) is built on the site of an AD 470 temple. Moustiers is also known for its decorative **faïence** (earthenware pottery); 15 ateliers display their own styles.

**Activities****Cycling & Driving**

The **Route des Crêtes** (D952 & D23; ☺closed Nov-Feb) corkscrews along the northern rim, past **Point Sublime**, which offers a fisheye view of serrated rock formations falling away to the river below. The best view from the northern side is from **Belvédère de l'Escalès**.

Also heart-palpitating, **La Corniche Sublime** (the D955 to the D71 to the D19) twists along the southern rim, taking in landmarks such as the **Balcons de la Mescla** (Mescla Terraces) and **Pont de l'Artuby** (Artuby Bridge), the highest bridge in Europe.

A complete circuit of the Gorges du Verdon via Moustiers Ste-Marie involves about 140km of relentless hairpin-turn driving. Tourist offices have driving itineraries. The only village en route is **La Palud-sur-Verdon** (930m). In winter, roads get icy or snowy; watch for falling rocks year-round; and heaven forbid that you get stuck behind a caravan in summer – opportunities to pass are rare.

**Walking**

You can walk most of the canyon along the often-difficult GR4, a route covered by IGN map 34420T, 1:25,000 *Gorges du Verdon*. The full route takes two days, though short descents into the canyon are possible. Bring a torch (flashlight) and drinking water. Camping on gravel beaches is illegal; waters rise quickly and sweep things away. Check with tourist offices before embarking.

In addition to canyon descents, dozens of blazed trails fan out from Castellane and Moustiers through untamed countryside. The excellent English-language *Canyon du Verdon* (€4.20), available at the tourist offices, lists 28 walks in the gorges and the *Canyon du Verdon* map shows five.



## Outdoor Sports

Castellane's and Moustiers' tourist offices have complete lists of companies offering rafting, canyoning, horse riding, mountaineering, biking and more. The newest thrill-seeking pursuit is **floating**: river-running with only a buoyancy bag strapped to your back.

Castellane is the main base for water-sports companies; all offer similarly priced trips (April to September, by reservation). Families should bear in mind that many activities are unsuitable for children under eight.

### Guides Adventure

OUTDOOR SPORTS

(0206 85 94 46 61; [www.guidesaventure.com](http://www.guidesaventure.com)) Canyoning (€45/70 per half-/full day), rock climbing, rafting (€55/75) and 'floating' (€50/90).

### Latitude Challenge

BUNGEE JUMPING

(0204 91 09 04 10; [www.latitude-challenge.fr](http://www.latitude-challenge.fr), in French; €105) Adrenaline-seekers throw themselves off the 182m Artuby Bridge.

### Aboard Rafting

WATER SPORTS

(2/fax 04 92 83 76 11; [www.aboard-rafting.com](http://www.aboard-rafting.com); place de l'Église, Castellane) White-water rafting and canyoning trips.

## Sleeping & Eating

### CASTELLANE & AROUND

The nearby river is lined with seasonal camping areas. Hotels and restaurants cluster around the central square, place Marcel Sauvaire and place de l'Église.

### Gîte de Chasteuil

B&B €

(0204 92 83 72 45; [www.gitedechasteuil.com](http://www.gitedechasteuil.com); Hameau de Chasteuil; s/d/tr from €56/66/84) This irresistible *chambre d'hôte* in an old schoolhouse in the 16th-century hamlet of Chasteuil has fantastic views to the mountains 12km west of Castellane. Impeccable rooms with crisp linens are a perfect stop for walkers on the GR4, which passes right outside.

### Domaine de Chasteuil Provence

CAMPGROUND €

(0204 92 83 61 21; [www.chasteuil-provence.com](http://www.chasteuil-provence.com); camping per site €14.50-25; ☺ May-Sep; ☺) Lovely, leafy grounds, optional powered sites, and timber chalets (from €105 for two nights for four people). Just south of Castellane.

### Nouvel Hôtel Restaurant du Commerce

HOTEL, PROVENÇAL €€

(0204 92 83 61 00; [www.hotel-fradet.com](http://www.hotel-fradet.com); place de l'Église; s/d €75/95; ☺ Mar-Oct; ☺ ☺ ☺)

Exceptionally friendly spot opens to a large garden. Best known for its 'rustic-gastronomic' **restaurant** (menus €22-28), serving Provençal favourites.

### Auberge du Teillon

PROVENÇAL €€

(0204 92 83 60 88; D4805 to Grasse; menus €22-34; ☺ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Tue-Sat, closed mid-Nov–mid-Mar) Locals flock 5km east of Castellane to La Garde for the area's best eats: housemade pâté or tender-roasted pigeon.

## MOUSTIERS & AROUND

### Le Petit Ségriès

B&B €

(0204 92 74 68 83; [www.gite-segries.fr](http://www.gite-segries.fr); s/d from €50/60) Friendly hosts Sylvie and Noël maintain six French-washed rooms and have lively *tables d'hôte* (€21 including wine) at a massive chestnut table with farm-fresh lamb, rabbit and mountain honey. Rent bikes (per half-day €19) or sign up for a bike tour (from €65).

### La Bastide de Moustiers

LUXURY HOTEL, GASTRONOMIC €€€

(0204 92 70 47 47; [www.bastide-moustiers.com](http://www.bastide-moustiers.com); d from €240, menus €55-75; ☺ ☺) This exquisite Provençal nest belonging to legendary chef Alain Ducasse is known up and down the country for its very fine cuisine – hence the helicopter pad in the garden. Rooms are equally sophisticated and breakfast is served on a shaded terrace while baby deer scamper on the grounds.

### La Ferme Rose

COUNTRY HOTEL €€

(0204 92 75 75 75; [www.lafermerose.com](http://www.lafermerose.com); chemin de Quinson; d €78-148; ☺ ☺) This fabulous converted farmhouse contains quirky collections including a Wurlitzer jukebox and a display case of coffee grinders. Its dozen boutique rooms draped with embroidered canopies are named for the colour dramatising each chic sleeping area. Off the D952, 1km from Moustiers.

### Le Petit Lac

CAMPGROUND €

(0204 92 74 67 11; [www.lepetitlac.com](http://www.lepetitlac.com); rte du lac de Ste-Croix; tent per 2 people €14-22, eco-cabins per week from €229; ☺ camping mid-Jun–Sep, cabins Apr–mid-Oct; ☺) In a peaceful lakeside spot, this activity-oriented campground has great eco-cabins (two-night minimum) with hemp walls, solar hot water and low-output electricity.

### La Ferme Ste-Cécile

GASTRONOMIC €€

(0204 92 74 64 18; D952, quartier St-Michel; menus €26-35; ☺ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun,



closed mid-Nov–Dec) Seek out one of Haute-Provence's best meals. Among the delicious culinary surprises served on the terrace of this authentic *ferme auberge* find the thinnest slice of Roquefort and pear warmed in filo pastry, or foie gras wrapped in sweet quince. Everything on the menu is seasonal, such as the exquisite crème brûlée with fresh truffles!

### Les Comtes

ECLECTIC CONTINENTAL €€

(☎04 92 74 63 88; rue de la Bourgade; mains €16–28; ☺lunch Tue–Sun, dinner Tue–Sat, closed Nov–Feb) Laidback meals start with a mountain fruit apéritif. Follow up with dishes like squid-ink tagliatelle with saffron. In summer dine in the sunshine, in winter the mosaic-covered dining room.

## i Information

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Castellane** (www.castellane.org; rue Nationale; ☺9am–1pm & 2–7pm Jul & Aug, 9.15am–noon & 2–6pm Mon–Fri Sep–Jun)

**Moustiers Ste-Marie** (☎04 92 74 67 84; www.moustiers.fr; ☺daily, hr vary) Tip-top tourist office with resourceful staff and excellent documentation for exploring the area.

## i Getting There & Around

Public transport to, from and around the Gorges du Verdon is limited. The Moustiers tourist-office website provides current schedules.

Daily in July and August, and at weekends from April to September, the Navettes des Gorges shuttlebuses (€7) link Castellane with Point Sublime, La Palud, La Maline and Moustiers. Tourist offices have schedules and bike-hire information.

## Parc National du Mercantour

Deeply isolated and breathtakingly beautiful, the Parc National du Mercantour (www.mercantour.eu) is one of the last bastions of true wilderness in France. The terrain is mountainous but the sunshine (in excess of 300 days a year) is definitely Provençal. The park spreads across six valleys (Ubaye, Haut Verdon, Haut Var, Tinée, Vésubie and Roya-Bérèva).

### VALLÉE DE L'UBAYE

Vallée de l'Ubaye is ringed by a rollercoaster of rugged mountains. The valley's only town, **Barcelonnette** (elevation 1135m), has a fascinating Mexican heritage, resulting in some exceptional, very un-Alpine architecture. From the 18th century until WWII, some 5000 Barcelonnetais emigrated to Mexico to seek their fortunes in the silk- and wool-weaving industries, building mansions throughout the town upon their return.

Rising 8.5km southwest, the twin ski resorts of **Pra Loup 1500** (sometimes called Les Molanes) and **Pra Loup 1600** (which has more infrastructure and nightlife) are connected by a lift system with the ski resort **La Foux d'Allos**. Pra Loup's 50 lifts are between 1600m and 2600m, with 180km of runs and a vertical drop of almost 1000m. In summer it's a hiker's and mountain biker's heaven. Outfitters in **Le Martinet** rent mountain bikes and arrange guided rides.

### WORTH A TRIP

## VALLÉE DE LA BLANCHE & LAC DE SERRE-PONÇON

Remote and sparsely populated, the beautiful **Vallée de la Blanche** (www.vallee.delablanc.com) is an unspoilt haven. The main 'resort' (although it's so tiny that it seems funny to call it a resort) is the 1350m **St-Jean Montclar**. It's particularly great for families, with skiing in winter and trekking galore in summer. The **tourist office** (☎04 92 30 92 01; www.montclar.com) has plenty of info.

Straddling the Haute-Provence–Hautes-Alpes border, Europe's largest manmade lake, **Lac de Serre-Ponçon**, sits high in the mountains and flows into Ubaye Valley. The lake district's main town, **Embrun** (elevation 870m), was the Roman capital of the Alps and later a bishopric. Its enchanting tangle of cobblestone streets lead to the dramatic black-and-white stone cathedral. In town, pack a lakeside picnic from the farm produce at **La Ferme Embrunaise** (☎04 92 43 01 98; place Barthelon) and the chocolatier-pâtisserie of **Luc Eyrieu** (☎04 92 43 01 37; place Barthelon).

Hidden deep in the forest, 3km uphill from the lake's eastern bank, is the beautiful 12th-century **Abbaye de Boscodon** (☎04 92 43 14 45; Crots; admission €3.50; ☺8.30am–7pm Mon–Sat, 12.15–7pm Sun).



Pra Loup's **tourist office** (☎04 92 84 10 04; [www.praloup.com](http://www.praloup.com); ☉9am-noon & 2-5pm May-Nov, 9am-7pm Dec-Apr) has lists of accommodation. Free shuttles operate between Barcelonnette and Pra Loup.

### VALLÉE DE LA VÉSUBIE

A dead-end valley accessed from the south, Vésubie is often referred to as 'Nice's Switzerland' due to its proximity to the Côte d'Azur. In **St-Martin-Vésubie, Escapade Bureau des Guides** (☎04 93 03 31 32; [www.guidescapade.com](http://www.guidescapade.com); place du Marché; ☉Jul & Aug) organises guided walks, climbs (€35) and canyoning (€30 to €60) and leads walks into the Vallée des Merveilles.

The **tourist office** (☎04 93 03 21 28; [www.saintmartinvesubie.fr](http://www.saintmartinvesubie.fr), in French; place Félix Faure; ☉9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun) and the **Parc National du Mercantour Visitors' Centre St-Martin-Vésubie** (☎04 93 03 23 15; ☉9am-noon & 2-6pm) have loads of information.

Sustained hunting over 1000 years led to the eventual disappearance of the wolf (*Canis lupus*) from France in 1930. But in 1992 two 'funny-looking dogs' were spotted near Utelle. Since then wolves have been making a natural return, loping across the Alps from Italy. Set high in the mountains of Le Boréon, **Wolf Watch at Alpha** (☎04 93 02 33 69; [www.alpha-loup.com](http://www.alpha-loup.com); Le Boréon; adult/child €10/8) allows visitors to find out how man is learning to live with the wolf and watch wolves roam wild. Visit year-round, but opening hours vary; call ahead or visit its website for details.

Magical mountain views unfold from the timber terrace of secluded **Le Boréon** (☎04 93 03 20 35; [www.hotel-boreon.com](http://www.hotel-boreon.com), in French; d/tr €67/96, half board per person €64), the quintessential chalet. Cosy up in one of its dozen rooms and watch the snowflakes fall outside while dining on Alpine specialties (*menu* from €22).

In nearby **La Colmiane**, 7km west of St-Martin-Vésubie, the **Bureau des Guides** (☎04 93 02 88 30) leads outdoor activities and **Colmiane Sports** (☎04 93 02 87 00) and **Ferrata Sport** (☎04 93 02 80 56) lead walks and hire mountain bikes. The small **ski station** has one chairlift to Pic de la Colmiane (1795m) and 30km of ski slopes and walking and mountain-bike trails.

Public transport is minimal in the area but **TRAM** (☎04 93 85 92 60) operates two daily buses between Nice and St-Martin.

### VALLÉE DES MERVEILLES

The 'Valley of Wonders' contains one of the world's most stupendous collections of Bronze Age petroglyphs. They date from between 1800 and 1500 BC and are thought to have been made by a Ligurian cult. Effectively an open-air art gallery, wedged between the Vésubie and Roya Valleys, it shelters more than 36,000 rock engravings of human figures, bulls and other animals spread over 30 sq km around Mont Bégo (2870m).

The main access route into the valley is the eastbound D91 running from St-Dalmas de Tende in the Vallée de la Roya to Castérino, where the Parc National du Mercantour has a summertime-only **park office** (☎04 93 04 89 79). Alternatively, go via the dead-end D171, which leads north to the valley from Roquebillière in the Vallée de la Vésubie. As the area is snow-covered much of the year, the best time to visit, unless you are snow-shoeing, is July to September.

Access is restricted to protect the precious artworks: walkers should only visit with an official guide; contact a **Parc National du Mercantour Visitors Centre** (Castérino ☎04 93 04 89 79, Tende ☎04 93 04 67 00) or one of the private outfitters like **Bureau des Guides** (☎04 93 04 67 88; [www.berengeraventures.com](http://www.berengeraventures.com), in French; 6bis rue Grandis, Tende).



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